DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 937 CS 202 743

AUTHOR	Coppola, Carlo, Ed.
TITLE	Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature. South Asia Series Occasional Paper No. 23, Vol. II.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Asian Studies Center.
PUB DATE	74
NOTE	196p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$10.03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Asian Studies; *Conference Reports; Fiction; *Literary Analysis; Literary Genres; *Literary Influences; *Literature; Marathi; Panjabi; Poetry; Realism; Sanskrit; *Socialism
IDENTIFIERS	*Marxism

ABSTRACT

This document is the second of two volumes of papers dealing with various aspects of Marxist literary influence, and more specifically socialist realism, in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Included in this volume are articles that deal with such subjects as socialist realism and the progressive movement in Malayalam, realism in Marathi creative literature, Marxist orientation in the poetry of Vinda Karandikar and Narayan Surve, Pragativad in Panjabi literature, a Marxist approach to Sanskrit literature, the influence of Marxism on the poetry of Sri Sri, aspects of the poetic theory and practice of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and the social role of theatre in India. Also included in this volume are discussions of socialist realism and Indian literature, and purposive literature and literary craftmanship. (TS)

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FEB 16 1976

MARXIST INFLUENCES AND SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURE

Volume II

Winter 1974

South Asia Series Occasional Paper No. 23

Published by

Asian Studies Center
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

CARLO COPPOLA
EDITOR

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SOCIALIST REALISM AND THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT IN MALAYALAM

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In 1936 the first All-India Progressive Writers' Association meeting was held in Lucknow, and within a year a movement was started in Kerala as well, the Jeeval Sahitya Samiti, or Committee for Life-Oriented Literature. It was at that time when all over India the nationalist movement for independence from Britain was slowly and subtly being influenced by the teachings of Marx and the example of the Russian Revolution. As early as 1912, however, K. Ramakrishna Pillai had brought out a monograph on Karl Marx, but it took two more decades for Indian revolutionaries to gather solidly under the flag of Communism. But the storm was brewing. Socialist ideals were beginning to fascinate the intelligentsia and labor unions were being formed in the various trades and industries. In 1930 Kedamangalam Kappukkutty published a poem entitled "The Wind Messenger," which has been hailed as marking the beginning of the Progressive Movement in Malayalam in the Western sense of the term. K. Kamodaran brought out a collection of short stories, *Tears*, in 1936, and a play, *Rental Arrears* some time later, a drama which we will treat in some detail later in this paper. The tenor of writers' attitudes during this period are exemplified by the following, extacted from K. Kamodaran's introduction to *Tears:*

> All arts are only a reflection of the terrible class war that is going on every minute in this mad world of ours. . . . If properly examined, what is seen reflected there is the artist's class-consciousness. . . . As long as this rotten society of today continues to be divided into two groups such as the rich and the poor, the "haves" and the "have nots," the oppressors and the oppressed, we cannot live independently without merging into either of these. . . . We wish to record our strong protest against your reactionary activities indulging in lifeless and useless artistic creation, ignoring the cries of hunger around you. . . . I do not have to say any more than that these stories have been written for the purposes of propaganda.

By 1940, the number of writers with a sense of similar commitment had increased considerably. Take, for example, Kesava Dev who, in the preface to a collection of short stories published in 1940, categorically declared himself to be a writer of deep social and political commitment. A decade earlier he had summarized in Malayalam John Reed's famous book on the Russian Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World;* Kesava Dev called it *The Fire and the Spark* (1931), the former being Lenin and the latter Trotsky.

In *The Stories of Dev*, volume I, the author declares:

> I am proud to acknowledge that I am a propagandist. I am the propagandist of the progress of life. Some critics have alleged that I do my literary work on behalf of a certain political party. I do not deny the Party bias alleged against my work. . . . Let me ask you if there has ever been a writer who did not belong to some party. . . . As far as I am concerned, I admit unhesitatingly that there is Party bias in my writings. Moreover, I feel proud of writing for the class or party that is as opposed and exploited as I am. I do not expect any reward greater than the satisfaction that I might get from portraying the feelings and thoughts and desires and ideals of their ways of living.

All through the 1940s, the Progressive Movement was in full swing. In 1944 the first official conference of the Progressive Movement was held at Shoranur, Central Kerala. About the same time a manifesto on Progressive literature was issued from Kayamkulam under the signatures of Kesava Dev, Ponkunnom Varkey and Narayana Das. Another Progressive literature conference was held in Kottayam in 1945. By this time the Movement had attracted to its camp most of the reputable writers in the language, both young and old, for the definition of "Progressivism" was sufficiently broad and vague. At the All-Kerala Literary Conference held in 1943-44, M. S. Devadas tried to define the term "Progressive." In the course of his talk he said:

> Why this term 'Progressive?" I know some people do not like it. Even so, it is indispensible; we cannot give it up. Even the word "progress" upsets and frightens some people. Articles may be found in *Mathrubhumi Weekly* and some Travancore journals which raise complaints against the "Progressivists." I read an article recently in *Mathrubhumi Weekly* -- you might have seen it also. "The Progressivists are abroad! Beware! The Literary Conference should take care and act promptly." Such was the warning! I am surprised as to why this writer is so upset. Does he want the Literary Conference as well to be afraid of the Progressivists? All I want to say about it is this: if the Literary Conference wants to do its duty, if it tries honestly to further the cause of Malayalam literature and its own cause, it need never be afraid of the Progressivists. There are many areas where the two groups can co-operate.

> The second question I have to answer is whether those who plead for progress are against everything old. This question is being asked in several quarters, and many answers do arise. I have myself heard two self-contradictory ones, two kinds of interpretations. Sometimes you hear: "These people are against everything old; they want to throw out everything that has been produced up till now into the drainage canal." On the other hand, some say: "Formerly they used to attack everything old; now they approve of old things; there is some trick to this; take care!" All I have to say is that to condemn everything old *in toto*, without discrimination, to argue that everything old should be thrown down the drain is like repudiating one's father and mother. Nobody says that one should never look back; looking back need not indicate a reactionary attitude. But it is deplorable to sit at the same place, looking back all the time and chew the cud of the past. This we shall certainly condemn. If we look back, it should be to find out how we have been until now, how far, how fast and in what manner we have come forward. It then should be decided how we might improve on the means of speedy progress. Literature will not grow further without this yearning for progress.

Another writer, Kuttikrishna Marar, echoed similar sentiments in his "A Letter on Progressive Literature," written in 1943:

> I pray that the ultimate object of the Progressive Literature Association be nothing but the progress of literature and litterateurs. On the other hand, we must not let its goal be anti-Japanism or pro-Sovietism or pro-Pakistan, or pro-Undivided India, or in favor of the heavenly sanctity of the treaty between the British Government and the Indian native states.
>
> These may all be major things; let those who think one way or another about them write about these subjects as they will. The public will accept or reject what is written according to their political views. But if a writers' association takes these ephemeral questions for their ultimate goal -- if such an association tries to turn poets who should be world gurus into slogan-mongerers of certain parties -- that association will eventually go to the dogs. This inevitable fall was what happened to our old *jeeval sahitya* [life-oriented literature] Movement, and not the result of the words *jeeval sahitya*, which are not the exact translation of the English "Progressive literature."

> True progress of literature consists of the cultivation of public taste through the popularization of the best literary works, the prevention of its decline, and the extension of physical and spiritual encouragement to writers.
>
> There is no doubt that since literature has an important place in the progress of life, it should also be attended to. But you cannot produce immediate and visible results by starting a new literary movement as you would pass a piece of legislation that might bring about definite changes by a set date. If poverty could be eliminated by the publication of a hundred books about the poor and beggars, then the poverty of Kerala would have been ended long ago. By this same reasoning, writers in Kerala by now should have started writing poems about constipation. How many writers from Asan onward wrote about untouchability and the caste system in Kerala? Yet to what extent have the distinctions of caste and untouchability disappeared? This is not to say that such works have no value, but that they take effect in society very slowly. If such a work has to produce results at even a slow pace, it has got to be great literature; the literary tastes of the public have to be preserved too.

These relatively broad and liberal outlooks underwent a change by the time of the Quilon Conference of Progressive Writers held in 1946. The Communist Party of India had toughened its attitude after the end of World War II, and writers who were Party members interpreted the concept of commitment rather narrowly. A brochure entitled *How Progressive Literature Can Progress* was issued by the Communist writers led by E. M. S. Nambudripad. "The immediate effect of this move was the enunciation of the rigid dogmas of socialist realism, in the light of which what was once accepted as progressive was condemned overnight as reactionary."[1]

The Quilon Conference tried to project the view that only Communist writers should be regarded as Progressive. The Trichur Conference of 1948 also helped to bring the rift to the surface. Non-Communist writers became suspect in the eyes of the Communists and their fellow-travellers. When the Communist Party of India launched its Calcutta Thesis, cast as it was in the Stalinist mold, it advocated the rigid principles of Zhdanov. This led to a great deal of heated controversy. It was asked whether the independence of India should be accepted as a fact. Was Gandhi a revolutionary or a rebel? Could Socialist Realism be practiced in India under the circumstances that existed then? In a Socialist country like the Soviet Union, Socialist Realism might be all right; but in a capitalist country like India, only Critical Realism was possible. The names of critics like Ralph Fox and Christopher Caudwell were brought in to reject and to justify different stands. The late 1940s and early 1950s saw a large number of "guerilla stories" being written. The Communist and pro-Communist writers sponsored the concept of "fighting beauty." Interest was aroused not only in Russian and Eastern European countries, but also in China. Chinese Communism and the example of Mao Tse-Tung appealed to some writers and the cult of violence was advocated in many poems and stories. But most of the writers had dissociated themselves with this extremist section of the left. After the death of Stalin, the attitude of the Communists also changed. In the meanwhile, the Movement itself suffered irreparable damage. The later history of the Movement is thus summed up by Krishna Chaitanya:

> The Conference [of Progressive Writers] went through the motions of being alive and annual sessions continued to be held until 1954. But it was clear that the attempt at regimentation had completely failed on the literary front. The manifesto of the 1954 session held in Ernakulam declared that "the Conference was neither a political party, nor the cultural wing of any party." It defined progress as "the material and spiritual progress of the people." This included mechanization of agriculture and industry, starting of new industries, complete democratization of the administration, acceptance of regional languages as media for education and administration, elimination of illiteracy, fostering a rational and scientific outlook, remoulding the outmoded economic relations within the social structure. These were no doubt laudable aims. But they were scarcely original. In fact the manifesto was repeating both the intention and the idiom of India's Five Year Plan. Writers could not take it seriously, not because they did not clarify how these aims could furnish guide-lines to writers in their creative pre-occupation and programme.[2]

In the 1950s several of the erstwhile Communists became ex-Communists and condemned Stalinist rigidity in poignant terms. Kesava Dev, once very close to the Communist Party, disavowed all affiliations and even turned anti-Communist for a while. C. J. Thomas, who had in the 1940s left the Church and given up a priestly vocation to embrace Communism, became a committed anti-Communist writer. P. Bhaskaran wrote the poem "*Vayalar garjikkunnu*" (Vayalar Roars) to celebrate the Communist-led insurrection at Vayalar in 1946:

"I will arise, all over the land
I will arise, again,
I will arise!" So Vayalar roars!

Whilst the oppressed people
And the poets of "today"
Stand reflecting in amazement,

With the bright flow
Of passion in their eyes, in their heart
Overflowing revolutionary upsurge,

And warm blood coursing along
The veins, frothing with
A new kind of patriotic love,

In the storm brewing in the South
And moving near, we hear
The voice of Vayalar roar:

"I will arise, all over the land
I will spread, giving a new life
To the land; I will arise again."

The poem continues in this manner for twenty sections, each describing the scene of action and glorifying the martyrs who died fighting for democracy when they rose in revolt against the despotic monarch of the erstwhile Travancore State. However, in the mid-1950s, Bhaskaran denounced the Party and its anti-humanistic, steam-roller policies. His poem "The Chorus of the Dead," written in 1955, depicts martyrs for freedom who appear in different roles, condemning political parties that thrive on human sacrifice occasioned by violent insurrection:

At this dread middle of the night
When darkness has stifled all sources of light
And fear shakes the world,
May this song of our rise
As a pointer to the world at large,
As a knife that tears off the veil
Of glory hung around the dead
By the proud generals who issue
Fresh commands to the rank-and-file,
Counting the profit and the loss
Of all this noble martyrdom,
And by the thinkers who vainly try
To raise a new sun in the sky
Out of a bonfire that they make
Of all those dying in the battle!
May the men already born into this world
And the children that await a future birth,
May all of them listen to the song we sing
Couched in the discordant language of death!

Similarly, O. N. V. Kurup, who had written propaganda verses about "My Daarling Sickle" and other symbols of the Communist Party, began to lament the betrayal of faith, the betrayal of the poet's vision by the politicians' ruthlessness.

With the coming of the Communist Party to political power in Kerala, the attitude of the public towards the Party was liable to change. The Communists formed their first government through the democratic election of 1957; but two years later, they were dismissed from power by the Central Government because of a popular upsurge against them in the state. They came to power again twice in the 1960s; by then, however, the Party had split and the situation was difficult. At the present time, the two Communist parties are trying to enlist the support of writers and are holding separate conferences, often attacking each other in veiled references. Right now, some of the writers who had in the 1950s and 1960s turned anti-Communist are again joining one or the other party. But now the Communists cannot repeat their tactics of two decades ago and alienate writers.

Leaving theoretical discussions aside, it may be worthwhile to consider certain individual works which stand above all controversies as "Progressive" landmarks of the last fifty years. Chandu Menon (1847-1899), the first Malayalam novelist of distinction, wrote two novels, *Indulekha* and *Sarada*, which may be said to have heralded realism into Malayalam literature. He was obviously influenced by the fiction he had read in English, but his realistic portrayal of contemporary social realities is a remarkable achievement. He was mainly concerned with the tragic and comic aspects of the life of upper-class Hindu families, and he succeeded in maintaining the balance between the claims of art and those of social criticism. But Chandu Menon had no immediate successors and it took nearly forty years of Malayalam fiction to provide a worthy successor to the two novels of Chandu Menon.

During this same period Malayalam poetry forged ahead and in the second decade of the twentieth century, there was intense preoccupation with contemporary social and political issues in Malayalam poetry. The liberation and elevation of the untouchable classes and the struggle for India's independence from Britain were the two most outstanding issues of the time. Vallathol Narayana Menon wrote poems hailing the nationalist political leaders and their views on social and economic problems. Kumaran Asan, himself belonging to one of the lower castes, touched upon the evils of casteism and untouchability in several of his poems. In his *Duravastha* and *Chandala bhikshuki*, both written in 1922, Asan draws specific attention to these social problems and advocates drastic steps to solve them. The first of these narrative poems, *Duravastha*, is concerned with a contemporary social upheaval known popularly as the Moplah Rebellion. As a result of this violent social revolt, a girl of an upper-class brahmin caste is made to live and marry a member of one of the lowest castes. Asan uses this story as a canvas to project his view on social reform:

> Wake up, O you gardeners; wake up and toil; spring is
> at hand!
>
> In this garden enriched by beautiful blossoms on high
> bougst and low,

Remember, there is not a single flower which does not
delight the Lord.

. . . .

Times have changed; the threads of tradition have
become too old;
Men shall no longer remain bound with this feeble thread
which cannot hold.

Come forward and replace the laws, or else they are sure
to displace you--

There is a raging wind unceasingly reverberating with
this utterance in today's Kerala.
Time from all four directions declares the selfsame
thing; and even the earth beneath your feet resounds
with the din of unrest.

Duravastha was written long before the Progressive Movement was formally inaugurated; but, nevertheless, it foreshadows the strengths and weaknesses of most of the works that were later published under the banner of Socialist Realism. The propagandist zeal leads to authorial intrusion which destroys the total artistic appeal. Often we feel we are listening to a public speech. If the author's professed sincerity and the authenticity of the portrayal were the sole criteria, then some of these works could claim to be classics. But for want of detachment on the part of the author, they tend to be sentimental and melodramatic. Even the genuineness of the suffering presented in them evokes no more than pity for the writer instead of the sufferer. Excessive sympathy expressed by the author for the "have-nots" makes it difficult for him to do justice to characterization; as a result, the poor are always portrayed as possessing angelic innocence, and the rich are invariably villains and rascals. There is, in addition, a shift of emphasis from fate to society as the source of suffering. All evils proceed from the decadent social order; they are not in any way connected with the actions of individuals. A general tendency we notice in the literature of the Progressivist school is that characters are conceived as types and their experiences are of a common, generalized pattern. The stories or situations are often typical, not individualized. In these writings there is an over-simplification of life lived not only by the upper class, but also by the working class. There are any number of explicit, generalized statements on the social situations and even shouting of slogans.

At this point, let us turn to K. Damodaran's play *Pattabakki*, or *Rental Arrears*, which Farley Richmond touches on briefly in his article in this volume (see pp. 167-188). This is one of the first plays written and performed as part of the political movement to organize the landless agricultural laborers. The purpose of the work is to convince the audience that the feudal economic system is rotten, that it has to be replaced by a Socialist system of economics. The play was written in 1937 and was performed before large audiences in different parts of Malabar District. It was banned for a time by the Government. However, it is significant that although the political parties are still agitating for the same or similar causes now, the play is no longer performed by them. Some of the issues raised in the play have recently been solved as a result of the land reforms enacted by the Government. Eviction of the landless tenants is a thing of the past; but we still have the problem of poverty. In the play, Kittunni, the mainstay of the tenant family, is forced by poverty to become a thief. He is caught red-handed and put into jail for six months. During his absence, his mother, sister and little brother are evicted from their house by the landlord and his agents for failure to pay the rental arrears. The old mother dies on the roadside for want of food, shelter, medical aid and whatnot. His sister is forced to become a prostitute in order to earn enough to prevent her younger brother from suffering the effects of poverty and ill-health. When Kittunni gets out of jail after six months, he is at first moved by righteous indignation at the degradation of his sister. She then explains to him how their social circumstances are ultimately responsible for their present state and both the sister and brother declare their intentions to work together to change the social system. The last scene of the play is as follows:

Scene Fourteen

(The house of prostitution; 5:00 P.M. Kittunni and Kunhimalu are on stage.)

Kittunni: Tell me, tell me the truth! How do you manage to live here? *(Kunhimalu covers her face with her hands and weeps; Kittunni getting angrier.)* Tell me! Tell me the truth! How can you stay in this place? *(Kunhimalu is silent.)* So, what I've been hearing is all true! My sister, whose honor and decency I have valued above everything else, that sister -- O God, not a sister, but a whore! -- I have never before had such a terrible insult --

Kunhimalu: Brother, I am a whore. I am immoral; I have sold my purity. I am all that! But look here! I too know how to weep; my eyes too become filled with tears. Brother -- *(She moves closer to Kittunni.)*

Kittunni: Never! Get away from me! You know how to weep, do you! Whores must not only know how to laugh, but how to weep also! I still don't understand it.

Kunhimalu: You may say what you like, brother, but just look into my face for once.

Kittunni: I am not your brother -- you harlot who's sold her honor!

Kunhimalu: O God, I must endure this too! In this cruel society, in the vile society of today where one has to sell her flesh to quench her hunger, even the relationship between brother and sister does not last at all. Fine! This Kunhimalu, this whore who, out of poverty lost her mother, bartered her honor for her little brother's sake, and has now become the object of her older brother's contempt and ridicule, she knows well what she must do next. But you should know one thing, brother. I did not take up this heinous profession for my own sake.

Kuttunni: *(Staring at her face)* For whose sake, then?

Kunhimalu: For whose sake? I'll tell you. For my little brother, for my dear little brother! Whom did you steal for? For whose sake did you, brother, suffer in jail?

Kuttunni: For my mother, for my sister, for my little brother.

Kunhimalu: Yes, brother, to help the suffering family your sister bartered away her honor!

Kuttunni: O Kunhimalu!

Kunhimalu: Brother, if only you knew how our mother died on the roadside, with no help from anyone, no medicine, not even some rice-water -- *(Her eyes filling with tears)*

Balan: *(Entering)* Is it my brohter? *(He embraces Kittunni. All three remain silent with a variety of expressions.)*

Kuttunni: Mother, O my dear mother!

Balan: Our mother is dead, brother; she is gone.

Kunhimalu: We should not say, brother, that mother is dead. The landlord, that monster, that evil man, killed our mother; that is what we should say!

Kittunni: True, we should say that she was killed. Because of rental arrears, we were driven out of the house where we were born and where we grew up; because of rental arrears, they forcibly took away all the rice we grew; and again, because of rental arrears, they drove us out to die helplessly in the streets. This is real killing.

Kunhimalu: It is the oppression of such landlords that force people like us into theft and prostitution.

Balan: Look here, brother. Sister got me this shirt.

Kittunni: Yes, in this cruel society, in the society of our time when large numbers of people, because of the rich and their lackeys, have to put up with starvation, theft and prostitution are no sins at all! It is poverty, Kunhimalu, that makes me steal. If stealing and prostitution are to end, poverty should disappear first. If poverty is to disappear, then the government we have today must change.

Kunhimalu: It should change, but how?

Kittunni: We should retaliate against this society, Kunhimalu. We should refashion the social structure.

Kunhimalu: Retaliate! Refashion! But how?

Kittunni: I shall tell you how it can be done. Come

Curtain

The above is a literal translation of the final scene of *Pattabakki*. P. K. Parameswaran Nair writes the following about this play:

> The next development [in the Progressive Movement] was the adoption of political ideologies as operative principles of the drama. The struggle for political freedom unleashed a tendency to question every authority including the wielders of economic power. The landlord was the first target of attack, and such of these playwrights who sought to propagate the new economic ideologies seized upon the landlord-*versus*-tenant theme for their productions.

> *Pattabakki* (The Landlord's Dues) of K. Damodaran is the first major play to treat of this question. It is not a political play in the strict sense of the term -- it features only the conflict between a tenant and his landlord against the socio-economic background of Kerala -- but the implication is that political power upholds vested interests and, as such, is a party in the conflict. . . . The intention of the dramatist is to drive home to the audience some of his political views, that poverty and dependence on the higher-ups breed immorality, that an equalitarian society can alone eradicate it, and that by revolution alone can such a state of affairs be brought about. The story is unfolded cleverly and the denouement carries a certain measure of conviction. Being based on the life audience, and the conflicts are portrayed with a power calculated to excite their imagination.

The connection between the play and the political activities of the Communist Party is quite obvious. There are in almost every scene passages exhorting the peasants and agricultural laborers to unite and fight against the landed gentry. This kind of explicit propaganda actually forces the playwright to choose for stage presentation only those scenes which will further the cause of the Party. To satify this need, the writer often has to distort reality to conform to the preordained pattern of dramatic representation. As a result of this, what we get in the play is not realism at all, but romanticism filled with the daydreams and wishful thinking of the kind that will serve the Party's interests. The landlord has to be an out-and-out villain, immoral, violent, avaricious, uncharitable, etc. In overstating his case, the dramatist, like almost all of the writers of the Progressive school, has to sacrifice realism, although he always swears by realism. That this oversimplification in character portrayal is true of these sorts of works in most Indian languages is clear from the following observation made by T. W. Clark:

> The prose narratives which are based on social situations share a common didactic purposed with the moral tales; and often the method of presentation is similar too. Characterization for example is generally typified by the same black-and-white method of delineation. The themes selected varied from language to language and from generation to generation, but some evoked universal interest, particularly those dealing with the family, marriage and education.[3]

In other words, most of the poems, plays and stories of the Progressivists are variations on the same method as employed by the didactic writers of the past who, of course, had traditional religion and morality to propagate. On the one hand, we have absolutely good characters, incarnations of gods and goddesses; on the other, devils, demons and sub-human monsters. In the traditional tales, too, the course of narration is punctuated with authorial pronouncements regarding their underlying philosophy. R. E. Asher has translated a passage from Takazhi Sivasankara Pillai's novel *The Scavanger's Son* to illustrate the kind of authorial intrusion which is very common in the writings of the Progressivists:

> See how nowadays religion, with its consoling message of life after death, makes its approach with so much more enthusiasm and sincerity than in former days; are not even the powers-that-be willing to make concessions? Do not big millionaires donate huge sums of charitable institutions? Thinkers are trying to revise their philosophies! Some people go so far as to say there is communism in the Bible. What lies behind all of this? It is because of the reverberating of the dissatisfaction lying in the depths of the hearts of millions of people in the world can be heard! It is greater than the roar of the mighty ocean![4]

A similar kind of ideological obsession seems to have marred the artistic effect of several poems of Changampuzha Krishna Pillai and G. Sankara Kurup, two major contemporary Malayalam poets, when they write as spokesmen of this particular school. Changampuzha's famous poem "A Bunch of Bananas," although it does not speak on behalf of any political party, is admirable when it narrates the story of poverty-stricken children whose fancy is kindled by a bunch of bananas; but its total effect is considerably spoiled by passages in which the poet himself steps forth to denounce the rich who deprive these children of their minimal comforts. We get lines such as these following, which dilute the sentiments of the poem:

> The poor, the needy, the helpless ones,
> Who will know their grief, alas!
> . . . .
> Oppressed ones! Will your children remain at rest
> Without taking revenge for all this?

Sankara Kurup has a number of poems which are no more than versification of ideological pronouncements from political leaders such as Gandhi, Nehru, Marx, etc. In several of them, however, the hoarseness is considerably toned down by his use of metaphorical language, such as when he compares the maharajas to stars that will grow pale when the bright dawn of freedom and equality arrives, or when he likens the fire that lights a number of *bidis* (a cheap type of cigarette) to the spark of humanity or spirituality that is common to men of all classes.

Most of the works of other poets who formally belonged to the Progressive Movement are quite thread bare in their poetic content. A large number of poems of the 1940s and early 1950s are no longer read at all. The short stories of the less politically-oriented writers such as Karur Neelakanta Pillai and Vaikom Muhammed Basheer have gained predominance over those of politically committed writers such as Kesava Dev and Ponkunnom Varkey. In the 1950s the so-called Progressivists themselves moved away from their earlier naiveté, as is shown by Takazhi Sivashankara Pillai's celebrated novel *Chemmeen*, in which the author turns away from the subject of class war to a seaside romance, a sort of Romeo and Juliet of the fisher-folk. The same trend is found in the work of the new novelists such as Uroob, M. T. Vasudevan Nair, K. Surendran, and Parappurathu. What an artist devoted to life and not to theories about life can achieve is demonstrated by Urboob's novel *Ummachu*.[5] Most of the writers who had in the 1940s contributed to a volume of essays under the title *Why Progressive Literature?* had themselves redefined their positions later.

As a Movement, Progressive literature in Malayalam is dated. It belongs to the period roughly from the middle of the 1930s to the mid-1950s. Its main contributions were sociological. On the credit side it must be said that it helped the writers develop a social awareness which, if the ideological bias is excluded, is still a vital concern with most writers in Kerala. What has really led to the extinction of the Movement is the supersession of dogmatic ideologies by a more profound, more sensitive, less partisan approach to life and its manifold problems. The major writing of the post-1955 period is marked by a better insight into the psychological aspects of human behavior, the importance of the individual, the evil consequences of the herd instinct as promoted by political groups, and the irony arising from the grand scale discrepancy between one's professed ideals and his real actions. *The Epic of the Twentieth Century* by Akkitham, *Kurukshetram* by Ayyappa Paniker, *"Muthichippi"* by Sugathakumari, *"Pithrugamanam"* by Ravi Varma, *"Kirata urttam"* by Ramakrishnan and "The Museum" by Sachidanandan are poems in which, although there are no ideological obsessions, some of the deeper truths of life as lived by man alone or in groups are explored without resort to any oversimplification. Ponjikkara Raphy's *"Swargadoothan,"* M. T. Vasudevan Nair's *"Nalukettu,"* O. V. Vijayan's *"Khazakinte itihasam,"* Sachidanandan's *"Alkoottam"* and M. Govindan's *"Sarpam"* are works of fiction which seek out new areas of human experience beyond the reach of the masters of the Progressive school. The plays of Ponkunnom Varkey and Thoppil Bhasi once showed the stage as an appendage of socio-political movements, but they have now been superseded by the experimental plays of C. J. Thomas, G. Sankara Pillai, K. T. Mohammed, and C. N. Sreekantan Nair. All the works of the post-Progressive period are characterized by a negative reaction to the Movement itself; but the most important valuable aspect of the Movement -- namely, a certain seriousness in the artist's concern with his themes -- has, I think, been silently absorbed by the most important writings of recent times.

FOOTNOTES

1. Krishna Chaitanya, *A History of Malayalam Literature* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1971), p. 407.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 408-409.

3. Introduction, *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development*, ed. T. W. Clark (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 16.

4. R. E. Asher, "Three Novelists of Kerala," *ibid.*, p. 218.

5. See K. Ayyappa Paniker, "The Critical Study of Malayalam Novel: 'Ummachu' by Urboob," *Fiction and the Reading Public in India*, ed. C. D. Narasimhaiah (Mysore: University of Mysore, 1965), pp. 177-84. For a brief but comprehensive description of Malayalam fiction, also see Verghese Ittiavira, *Social Novels in Malayalam* (Bangalore: C. I. S. R. S., 1968).

REALISM IN MARATHI CREATIVE LITERATURE

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Realism is a term with many connotations and shades of meaning. It may be described as a body of critical doctrine which derives its strength from the creative writer's ability to capture reality. The term realism was first introduced in English criticism by an anonymous writer in the *Westminster Review* in 1851 to describe and explain the French literary movement led by Balzac. In literary practice there are different kinds and even degrees of realism. For instance, the realism associated with Chaucer and Shakespeare, Pope and Swift would be very different from the realistic trends found in the works of Balzac and Zola, Gogol and Gorky. Realism is a term used in contrast with idealism and Romanticism. Then, again, there are different degrees of realism which are exemplified in the use of such terms as realism and naturalism. The basic ingredient of realism is the artist's capacity to grasp and express reality, and a great deal would depend on what reality would mean at a given time in history. There are sordid realities as well as rewarding realities which only indicate the co-existence of good and evil in life. Realists in nineteenth-century French fiction began to emphasize the sordid and unpleasant facts of life and their view and valuation of life exercised a profound influence on Realism in world literature.

Socialist realism is a new aspect of the realistic doctrine which lays emphasis on social and economic concepts which are implied in the growth and development of communities. Engels, Ralph Fox, Maxim Gorky and other left-wing progressive writers have dwelt on the various aspects of socialist realism in Russian and world literature. The other realists may be termed as bourgeois realists who endeavor to capture reality in the capitalistic world. The concept of reality in a working class world is obviously different from the idea of the real in a bourgeois world. This attitude towards these political polarities has given rise to the term, socialist realism. Socialist realism is associated with, or emerges from, a new social and economic order based on the true principles of socialism. It is considered the fundamental principle and also the basic methodology of modern Russian or Soviet literature.

In my opinion Marathi literature, ancient and modern, does not provide very substantial evidence of the impact of socialist realism. I should, however, like to qualify this statement by saying that Realism is indeed a powerful force in Marathi creative writing, though it may not be fulfilling the criteria of socialist realism.

The lineage of Marathi language is not as ancient as that of Sanskrit or Tamil. Marathi as a spoken language is about a thousand years old; it sprang into literary expression in the early thirteenth century. It has a very hoary tradition of saintly and devotional poetry. Saint Dnyaneshwar (1271-96) is the greatest of ancient Marathi poets. Next in importance, in literary power and glory, is Saint Tukaram (1608-49), whose poetry has an extraordinary passionate quality and has become part of a living tradition in Maharashtra. Namdeo (1270-1350), Eknath (1533-99), Ramadas (1608-81) and Moropant (1721-94) are the other major figures in this glorious tradition of devotional poetry. These poets created and nourished a great religious and moral tradition. Dnyaneshwar's great classic *Dnyaneshwari* is a poetical commentary on and interpretation of the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* and is rich in the use of image and metaphor. Tukaram's famous *abhangas*, immortal poetical couplets, are marked by the racy idiom of common folk. They exemplify the Wordsworthian doctrine of poetic diction, the concept of using the language of the common man as a means for poetical expression. The Wordsworthian view, expressed in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, has been hailed as a valuable process of the democratization of poetic diction. Tukaram was a lord of language; his words come hot from the furnace of his mind and create their own pattern of linguistic vitality. The realistic quality of Tikaram's coinage of phrases and metaphors is, in fact, the beginning of the doctrine of realism in creative Marathi literature.

The role of this rich devotional and religious literature has been subjected to various interpretations. It may be the literary expression of *dharma*, or the quest for the spiritual and the absolute that is characteristic of Indian or Hindu culture. On the other hand, it would also be interpreted as the spiritual counterpart of a genuine realism in Marathi literature. Critics like D. K. Bedekar and G. B. Sardar have in fact emphasized this realistic and revolutionary role of ancient devotional literature in Maharashtra. The quest for the spirit was only the "other" side of a creative literature which had grown from the grass roots and which demonstrated the triumph of a near-Socialist Realism. Even though Socialism as a creed was not born in the seventeenth century, yet what these great saint-poets were writing was indeed a powerful expression of Socialism and realism, or social realism, in their true essence. They championed the cause of the downtrodden in their societies and voiced their protests against social evils and injustices. They were inspired by a missionary zeal for social and religious equality. This devotion to the doctrine of the equality of man appears almost revolutionary in the social context of class and caste in which they lived and wrote. These poets raised their voice against the pernicious aspects of caste, especially Tukaram and Namdeo, whose writings are marked by a zeal of social change and reestablishment of a new social order based on equality and justice. Their down-to-earth idiom and their inward awareness of the actual problems of contemporary society show that realism, almost bordering on social realism, was a powerful force even in early devotional Marathi literature.

Modern critics in Marathi have highlighted the historical and revolutionary aspects of the work of the saint-poets of Maharashtra. B. R. Sunthankar, a modern critic, has given a new, almost Marxist, interpretation of the achievement. He has dismissed as thoroughly untenable the objections raised against these saint-poets by historians, like V. K. Rajawade, that these saints were the prophets of inaction and that they unconsciously allowed themselves to become instruments of reaction. Their mysticism, it is said, was a misnomer for their incapacity to give a positive direction to society. These charges appear baseless because they ignore the historicity of their work. In fact, these saint-poets were pioneers of change and social reform and they created the intellectual and spiritual background for the birth and growth of Shivaji's stirring national movement for freedom. This historical role is the significant aspect of the poet-saints achievement in Maharashtra.

Between the ancient period of saint-poets and the modern phase which begins in the nineteenth century, there is a fine vogue of ballad-singers and writers of love lyrics. Maharashtra has a great tradition of *powadas* (ballads) and *lavanis* (love lyrics), which form part of its rich heritage of folk literature. Ramjoshi (1762-1812) is the leading light of this creative writing which may be described as the literature of the people. Anant Fandi (1744-1821) and Honaji-Bala created a great vogue of ballads and love lyrics. *Tamashas*, a type of folk drama, have now been recognized as genuine folk literature and are patronized by people and government alike. They are part of Maharashtra's living tradition even today.

From about 1885 onwards Marathi poets broke through the rigid barrier of old themes and techniques. They transcended the traditional *bhakti* cult and set devotional patterns. Some of these poets became more inward, more inclined to look into their own selves and dwelt on their personal perplexities, pains and pleasures. Marathi poetry in the era after 1885 became more subjective, lyrical and realistic than before. Other poets, though subjective in tone, were greatly affected by unjust social institutions and practices. Ancient saint-poets apparently sang of Lord Krishna, Vithoba and divine love. Modern poets in late nineteenth century and afterwards substituted love between man and woman for divine love; social and economic conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed for the moral conflict between good and evil. Thus a radical change was effected in subject matter, which in its train brought about a change in technique and mode of expression. This is, in effect, the beginning of a new realism, which accords with the now accepted criteria of modern literary realism in Western literature and beliefs.

"Keshavsut," or K. K. Damale (1866-1905), is the first notable Marathi poet who ushered in a new era in Marathi literature and marked almost a radical change in form and content towards realism. This new era in the history of Marathi literature is named after him: "The Age of Keshavsut." The whole attitude to life and its problems underwent a revolution. Keshavsut wrote poems on nature, man and society in the Wordsworthian manner, but his poems of social protest mark him as the first votary in Marathi poetry of social realism. He realized in his poetry the drift in social and economic pressures and gave them poetic expression. B. S. Pandit, a critic of Marathi poetry, commenting on Keshavsut's poem "Laborer," appreciates the poet's concern with the downtrodden and the working class. This poem was written in 1899 when the name of Karl Marx was not very familiar in India. Yet it is Marxist in tone and temper. However, it will be inappropriate to hasten to the tags or apply labels to Keshavsut since he was essentially a genuine humanist. He rebelled against the institutions of child marriage, untouchability and the custom of preventing widows from remarriage. The following poem, translated by Prabhakar Machwe, exposes the injustices and cruelties perpetrated on the untouchables or "Harijans" (a term used by Gandhi) by people of higher caste in nineteenth-century India.

The First Question of the Untouchable Boy

The children of untouchables,
poor, gay, playing on the roadside --
A Brahmin came from afar
to the simple kids what should he say:
"O you brats of *Mahars*, move away,
be gone! What are you playing at, you louts?
Run and give way to the Brahmin!"

The boys fled -- who would dare stay!
One amongst them did;
the wicked Brahmin brandished his club and shouted,
"Ass! they shadow must not fall on me,
get thee gone, or else this 'sweet present'!"
The kid too slunk homewards,
musing --
"What is my shadow fell on him,
what's so wrong about it?"

At home he asked the question of his mother.
The poor mother said:
"We are low and they are high;
when you see them, you had better step aside."

She said so -- simply.
How would she know
that highness in this world is built
on sin and glory
on the degradation of others!

Another poem, "A Worker Forced to Starve" is a more pronounced poetic expression of social realism with an awareness of economic realities. There is in it a hint of what may be termed as class struggle between the haves and the have-nots, the poor man's cottage and the rich man's mansion culminating in the starvation and frustration of the underdog. The persecuted individual in the poem has become very desperate when he declares: "Why was I not a stillborn?"

A Worker Forced to Starve

The sun god has reached the day's end,
color lends beauty to the setting,
everywhere joy and fun --
why should sadness fill my heart?

The whole day I looked in vain
for a farthing to come my way.
I labor daily to fill my belly,
today no one hired me!

These mansions appear so beautiful;
Did not my father build them?
I die, today, of hunger,
the rich people dance in their mansions!

I do not envy their luck,
A dry and coarse bread is enough for me,
I am ready to die, O God! in hard work,
why do you kill me with starvation?

Lord! if all are equal in your eye,
why are you so callous to the poor?
To some you give delicious food,
why don't you give me one simple piece of bread?

With blades of grass in their beak for the young ones
the birds happily fly to their homes;
Pointing to them
the wife says to the children:

"As the birds go to their nests
with grass for their young ones,
so your father, with food,
will soon come to you, don't weep!"

O beloved! O dear young ones!
How shall I show you my face again?
Why did I at all come to this earth?
Why was I not a stillborn?

"New Soldier" reveals the prophetic quality of Keshavsut, an awareness of the poet's mission in relation to the burning social and political problems of resurgent India. The poet expresses his consciousness of a wider and a deeper reality through the metaphor of a frog in the well. He also proclaims the principle of the brotherhood of man, which approximates to the creed of Socialist Realism?

New Soldier

I am the new soldier
with new spirit
of the new age.

Who dares bind me!
Neither a Brahmin, nor a Hindu, nor of any sect,
the fallen circumscribe the universal.
Insatiable my hunger,

no crumbs will do.
I am not a frog in the well,
my land shall be without fence,
who dares bind me!

I have brethren everywhere,
and everywhere signs of my home.
Go anywhere -- grass-covered land is below
Go anywhere -- the blue sky is overhead
Chubby children in shade
gay flowers in the sun,
a joy to the mind all this.

They are mine; I am theirs —
the same flow runs in us.
I am the new soldier
with new spirit
of the new age.
Whom do I worship?

Myself —
I see the universe within me
I worship the universe,
I am for myself.

Not for me the small men
who deny their "I-ness"
and start troubles for nothing.

Small or great I do not know,
good or bad, these opposites disappear,
near or far, the distance dissolves --

All is great and good and near and I am filled in All.
Like sugar crystals in *halwa*,
matter covers the Urge within,
inside the seed *same* quality, outside qualities like
     suger crust,
more and more granular like thorns pricking others.

Within and without
how will the conflict end?
This anxiety gnaws me within.

Time is for the kingdom of Peace,
I am its prophet -- the brave soldier
of new life!

Keshavsut sings the triumph of the "new spirit" which works for unity of thought. Distances dissolve in the limitless spatial vision of the poet. Disparities and differences vanish in its unifying and all-embracing urge. The image of the *halwa*, a sweet made of sugar crystals glazed on sesame seeds, which is exchanged between friends and relatives on the occasion of *Sankrant* (14 January every year), reveals the poet's inward craving for identifying himself with the world outside and society. Just as granulated sugar crystals are merged in *halwa*, the poet's self is united with the selves of his fellow men. Thus, the ritual of the *halwa* itself is turned into an image of man's unity with nature and his fellow men. This sentiment is idealistic as well as realistic and demonstrates the basic value that inspired the creative talent of Keshavsut.

Whereas Keshavsut was the leading light of social realism in Marathi poetry in the early phase, other poets such as Ram Ganesh Gadkari (1885-1919), "Bal-Kavi" or T. B. Thombre (1890-1918) and B. R. Tambe (1847-1941) were mostly inclined to explore their personal perplexities and express their vision in romantic image and sensuous metaphor.

Social realism also emerges as a force in the post-war Marathi literature. Whereas the poets of the "Ravi-Kiran" group -- Madhav Julian, Yeshwant, Girish -- concentrated on the personal feeling of love and frustration and explored the sonnet and the short lyric as a special mode, a new group of poets, led by "Kusumagraj," or V. V. Shirwadkar, in 1930, began to strike a new note of revolt against alien British rule and social and economic injustices in Indian society. They were realistic in spirit, rebellious in approach, challenging in tone. The poetry of Kusumagraj is marked by the spirit of blood and tears and also a sense of defiance directed against ageold social conventions. The poets of this school are called the worshippers of fire. They are imbued with revolutionary fervor and a passion for social change.

Kusumagraj is a great champion of the causes of the working class and the oppressed and his poems express his passionate involvement with the problems of the poor. His poems dwell on the miseries of the underdog and in this context, "Victim," "Auction," "Train and Earth" are especially significant. The class struggle between the haves and the have-nots is effectively reflected in "The Slave," "Empathy" and "Blocks of Ice." Another significant poem, which is Marxist in tone and spirit, is "Idol Breaker." In "Idol Breaker" the poet moves from the other-worldly to worldly approaches. He loses faith in God and divine justice and outlines the need for the improvement of man in a man-made world. The anti-capitalistic note is struck in "The Slave," whereas "In the Threshold of God" the realistic awareness of man's limitations is skillfully articulated. The poet's view that the oppressed in society also can rise in revolt against the oppressor is powerfully expressed in "Train and Earth." In this poem, the value of the earth is poetically stated. The earth is continually trampled upon by the running railway train and she cries in protest and pain. The train, proud of its puffing engine, its speed and energy, scorns the protestations of the earth:

> Weakling! you may cry and wail
> Why should the timid live and fail?
> I will strike my stell heels
> Into your soft and weak chest!

The earth is very proud of herself and identity and, therefore, cannot bear this insult meted out to her by the train. Soon after a cloud of smoke bursts from the valley and the bridge spanning the chasm between two hills collapses with a thunderous sound. The proud train is thrown into the hollow and breaks into several pieces and is completely destroyed. Thus, the note of triumph of the earth is struck by the poet.

In the later phase of Marathi poetry the work of Bal Seetaram Mardhekar is notable for its search after a wider reality -- culminating in a depth of experience and its emotional equivalence in a poetical form that constitute the true elements of his greatness. Mardhekar finds the world sadly "out of joint," divided by the conflicts and contradictions of selfish people. He believes that "every recitation of the alphabet of life has gone wrong" and he delves deep into the flux of life and finds it a chilly fake. His poetry is permeated by a deep sense of frustration caused by condition of the modern, dehumanized way of life. The recitation of the song of life has gone wrong.

> In this odd and strange life
> The score and the tables have all gone wrong,
> And at last the unsavoury reality
> Stares us in the face!

Mardhekar laments the ugly reality of life in which men are disposed of in a clearance sale.

In the post-Mardhekar phase, Narayan Surve is one remarkable poet whose work is imbued with Marxist spirit (see Vilas Sarang's article, pp. 31-42). He is no great poet, yet he is unique in the sense of his involvement with Marxism. Yet this kind of ideological approach has a very limited application to modern Marathi poetry.

What is perhaps significant is that a great deal of modern Marathi poetry since the times of Keshavsut is progressive in character and in its quest for the real it depicts various aspects of the poet's experience which is directly derived from life. Therefore, modern Marathi poetry becomes a fine exemplification of social realism and ideas and sentiments associated with it.

Drama

Historians of Marathi literature place the beginning and birth of Marathi drama in 1843 at Sangli. Vishnudas Bhave is the first Marathi playwright who produced the first play based on *Sitaswayamwar* in 1843. There are three stages of the development of Marathi drama: stage one begins in 1843 and closes in 1880; stage two commences in 1881 and concludes in 1914, and stage three starts from World War I and is still in progress. B. P. Kirloskar is the first great Marathi dramatist whose *Soubhadra* (1882) is now acknowledged as a classic. G. B. Dewal, K. P. Khadilkar and S. K. Kolhatkar are the dramatists of the next phase who brought glory to Marathi stage. R. G. Gadkari carried forward this glorious tradition and became the first widely popular playwright with his well known play *Ekach pyala* (1919). *Ekach pyala* is a realistic dramatization of the human predicament produced by the evil of addiction to drink. It is a very realistic and touching picture of the destruction of ideals.

Bhargavram Vithal Varerkar is the brightest exponent of socialist realism in drama. His famous play *Hach mulacha baap* (1916) was inspired by the true story of Snehalata, who burned herself to death in Bengal in 1914 for the incapacity of her father to pay dowry for her marriage. His other plays *Satteche gulam* (1922), *Turungachya darat* (1923) expose the evils of social institutions. A later play *Paratlyawar* (1944) tackles the theme of post-war reconstruction. Doulatrao and Arjunrao, on their return from war to their village, try to improve living conditions and farming in their areas. The idea that a Marathi is an excellent farmer and that he could also be a fine soldier is dramatically conveyed in this playlet devoted to postwar reconstruction.

Prahlad Keshav Atre is known as the most successful playwright, poet and humorist of Maharashtra. His multi-faceted genius shone in various areas and his personality was almost unique among Maharashtra's men of letters. He wrote excellent plays which were combinations of humor and satire. His *Sashtang-namaskar, Bhramacha bhopla, Mee ubha ahe* are classics of wit and irony. Atre had a realistic awareness of the complex social problems in a changing society and he dramatized his insights with great power.

Drama has advanced a great deal since the days of Khadilkar, Gadkari and Varerkar. Vasant Kanetkar and Vijay Tendulkar are the two major stars in this dramatic gallaxy. They have brought a new life and a new glory to the stage in Maharashtra. Kanetkar and Tendulkar both have a deep awareness of the real, which is combined with their talent for innovation in technique. The art of the drama is very closely linked up with the conditions of living in society and Kanetkar, Tendulkar and many other dramatists in Marathi have continued and strengthened the powerful realistic traditions of Marathi theatre.

Is is necessary to mention briefly the remarkable achievement of Marathi prose in the last two centuries. Lokahitwadi and Chiplunkar were the pioneers in prose writing. They laid the foundation of logical, argumentative and persuasive form of prose in Marathi. G. G. Agarkar wielded his pen with great power and his prose writing was an instrument of social reform. His contemporary, Likmanya Tilak, wrote essays and leading articles which created a wide political consciousness. Savarkar also wrote essays aimed at bringing about a new social order. Narayan Hari Apte, Vaman Malhar Joshi, Gajanan Tryambak Madkholkar are great artists in prose. They are also great stylists. Their work is rich in thought and inspired by a realistic awareness of the problems of contemporary society.

The Novel

The first novel in Marathi, *Yamuna-paryatan* (1857) was written by a Parsi author, Baba Padamji and was modeled on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Padamji's novel was the outcome of his deep interest in social reform and moral regeneration. But the first truly great realistic novelist in Marathi is Hari Narayan Apte (1864-1919). He is the greatest of all Marathi novelists in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century phase of Marathi literature. His early novel, *The Middle Condition*, strikes a very deep realistic note and portrays the conditions of living of neglected women, houses of prostitutes, the machinations of villains and enemies of the people. But his greatest triumph is *Pan lakshyat kon gheto* (1893), which is a masterpiece of realistic fiction in Marathi. The character sketch of Yamuna, the heroine of this novel, is superb and unforgettable. She is so much an embodiment of real life that it is difficult to describe her in conventional phraseology. The conflict between the old and the new and the persecution of Yamuna by her father-in-law, Shankar-Mamanji are the distinguishing features of the art of this early social classic.

Although Hari Narayan Apte was a writer of multi-farious talents, he is essentially a social realist. He cannot by any means be described as Marxist, yet his approaches and attitudes were very progressive and, in fact, laid the foundation of the novel as a form in Marathi. He was greatly imbued with a passion for social change and a new order of society. If realism is interpreted as the artist's attempt to capture social reality, Hari Narayan Apte's creative work must be considered a landmark in the realm of social realism.

Of all the notable novelists in Marathi, Vaman Malhar Joshi (1882-1945), created almost an epoch marked by moral seriousness and insights into social change. His *Ragini* (1915) is known for its ethical idealism as well as its worldly realism. Sridhar Venkatesh Ketkar (1884-1937) is the first scholarly Marathi novelist whose fiction is genuinely concerned with vital and burning social problems. Since he is a sociologist by training, his novels seem like sociological tracts, but they are unique in the growth of Marathi novel. N. S. Phadke excelled himself in many avenues of creative writing. He is a consummate artist of great skill and sophistication, but he lacks the realism or the high idealism that inspired his contemporary, V. S. Khandekar.

Of the earlier generation of novelists, but who continued to write in the 1960s, Mama B. V. Varerkar is an outstanding exponent of social realism. He is as much distinguished as a novelist -- he wrote more than one hundred novels -- as he is known as a gifted dramatist. He concentrated his attention on social problems and gave them literary expression in his novels and plays. His vast creative writing is a picture of urban and rural life in Maharashtra over the past fifty years. His involvement with burning social problems is so great that he has even been accused by critics of creating propaganda literature. This is an absurd accusation and Mama's creative writing is part of the truly creative and vital traditions of Maharashtra's cultural life. Varerkar has shown a sense of boldness in dealing with unsavory social problems. His well-known novel *Vidhawa kumari* (Widowed Virgin, 1928) presents Mathu as the widow who is subjected to great social repression. But she is full of energy, vitality and a spirit of revolt and seeks out her own path of self-improvement. Mathu is the living embodiment of regenerated womanhood. Mama's concern with social and political problems is continual in his literary career and is fearlessly presented in a down to earth and realistic idiom. For instance, he has dealt with the problem of *devadāsis*, temple girls who often became prostitutes, in *Kuldaivat* (1935); he has presented the problem of rural reconstruction in the Indian countryside in *Phataki vakal* (1941); he wrote a novel on the growth of Socialism in Maharashtra, *Dhavata dhota*, Part I 1930; Part II in 1933. He exposed the evils of casteism and narrow class differences in *Godu gakhale* (1930-32); he painted the miseries arising from marital dissonance in *Parat bhet* (1934); he even propogated the ideal of a matriarchal system of society as a panacea or solution to the problem of a man-ridden society in *Ughadjhap* (1935). His interest in rural problems is revealed in his attempt to bring about a regeneration of the great tradition of *tamasha* in *Me ramjoshi* (1942). He also wrote novels on the problem of prohibition or the evils of liquor consumption, *Petate pani* (Burning Water 1939). Varerkar is a great iconoclast because he champions the cause of the downtrodden and the oppressed in society. He ardently believes in the imperative need to create a new social order, as in *Shipayachi bayako* (The Soldier's Wife, 1943). The soldier's wife is shown lashing out at old sacred texts of the Hindus on the assumption that they decreed an inferior status for women in society. Varerkar seems to lack the finesse of sophisticated art and the delicacies of technique, but these are not indeed his objectives. His real objectives are to present life and its problems in their nakedness and horror. He thus becomes one of the leading lights of social realism in Marathi fiction.

S. N. Pendse may be truly regarded as a gifted exponent of the realistic mode in modern Marathi fiction. His *Garambicha bapu* (1944), translated into English as *The Wild Bapu of Garambi*, is almost a masterpiece of realistic fiction. The portrayal of Bapu brings out the true-to-life quality of Pendse's art of fiction and the deep conflicts which lie concealed below the apparently placid and uneventful life of the Konkan, the region in Western India. The Konkan is a land of great beauty; at the same time it is also a land of great poverty and squalor. Pendse's fiction offers a living example of the struggle of class, the miseries of the common man and the conflicts between the landlord and the tenants on land. The sufferings of Bapu are so real because they emerge from a realistic social and economic context and are expressed in a language which has vitality and dramatic powers. Another remarkable novel, which may be described as a full throated expression of social realism, is Vibhavari Shirurkar's *Bali*. *Bali* exposes the truths of actual life in all its nakedness and horror in relation to the life of tribals in their criminal settlement. The exposure of the ugly facts of life in their individual, social and economic context in *Bali* is matched by another heartrending drama powerfully presented in S. N. Pendse's *Haddapar (Outlawed)*.

Among the modern writers who are especially dedicated to painting a realistic picture of contemporary society are Venkatesh Madgulkar and Jayawant Dalvi. Venkatesh Madgulkar is the foremost of social realists because his life-like portrayal of country life in Maharashtra's villages has a haunting quality and rare excellence. His *Bangarwadi*, translated into

English, *The Village Has No Walls*, is a short but very powerful novel which depicts the exploitation of rural folk in modern India. His *Mandeshi manse* and *Kali aai* are excellent portraits and sketches of villagers and presentations of rural issues. His language, too, is almost completely free from the false romantic exterior. He is also a writer of short stories *(Jambhalache diwas)*, which present the predicaments of rural folk in the Konkan.

The novels of Annabhau Sathe are characterized by Marxist point of view. In the field of the short story, the work of Shankarrao Kharat is also marked by Marxist attitude. Jayavant Dalvi shows greater degree of modernity and a franker treatment of sexual predicaments in presenting the problems of the working class or lower class people.

Marathi novel in the last twenty-five years has struck many new chords and its growth is towards realizing a new kind of realism, in subject matter, technique and style.

There are indeed no novels which can be described as purely Marxist or Communistic, though writers among the Indian Communists, like Comrade Annabhau Sathe, have written stories and novels which may be described as problem-oriented and Progressive in their value judgements and positive in their attempt at creating a new social order based on justice and equality.

Conclusions

Maharashtra has a rich intellectual and spiritual tradition. The intellectuals in Maharashtra have been deeply drawn towards the ideologies of Socialsim and Communism. Well-known Socialists like S. M. Joshi, N. G. Gore, Achyut Patwardhan, P. V. Gadgil wrote powerful essays and treatises on aspects of Socialism. Among the well-known Communists S. A. Dange, Lalji Pendse, Sardesai wrote articles and speeches on their attitudes and approaches to class struggle in the Indian context. D. K. Bedekar is a distinguished intellectual whose social and political writings have been deeply influenced by Marxism.

The element of Marathi creative writing which could be ideologically described as Marxist is indeed very thin. Annabhau Sathe and S. R. Kharat are the only two writers who are ideologically inspired by Marxism. Yet the general preponderant quality of Marathi literature is Progressive and the quantity of creative writing which could be categorized under it, is great.

Since the inner spirit that characterizes Marathi creative writing is basically Progressive, it is marked by social realism combined with a sense of idealism. Social realism need not always be bracketed with socialist realism, though there exist between them many common factors.

One of the basic factors in social realism, in my opinion, is the close connection between literature and life, artist and society, artists and social progress. "In contrast with pre-revolutionary literature," writes V. Kirpatin, "our Soviet literature is characterized by a deep organic connection with life. The best Soviet writers pride themselves on the fact that in their work they express the ardent dreams of the workers and peasants, their struggle, and the results of their victories" (V. Kirpatin, *Literature of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R.* p. 8).

Socialist Realism as a doctrine arises from this organic connection between the artist and his society. It aims at exploring all aspects of social reality involved in the process of change and revolution. It should give a Socialistic direction to the forces of social change. "Socialist realism means," writes V. Kirpatin, "the concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development, drawing a picture which can catch the imagination of the reader and steeps him in the spirit of struggle and socialist reconstruction." (*Ibid.*, p. 4). The force of socialist realism, then, need not always be interpreted in narrow or rigid ideological terms, but could be linked with the general trends of social realism, which has inspired and directed the main movement of Marathi literature in the last two centuries. Maharashtra has been in the forefront of the movement for social, economic and political reform and in this great endeavor of national reconstruction its creative literature has been inspired by high idealism as well as by a steadfast devotion to social realism.

MARXIST ORIENTATION IN THE POETRY OF VINDA KARANDIKAR AND NARAYAN SURVE

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Vinda Karandikar is among the foremost Marathi poets today. He has been writing since about 1940 and has published four volumes of poetry, apart from a few books of children's verse. His work shows a great deal of variety. Among the early poems there are many inspired by a social conscience or directly by Marxist ideology, which are specifically the concern of this paper. There is a large number of love poems, or poems about sexual relationship, or about personal relationships in general. Throughout there are poems of a philosophical-mystical nature. This metaphysical strain is especially evident in the later poetry.

Karandikar comes of a middle-class brahmin family from the west-coast district of Ratnagiri. The Maharashtrian middle class has its own peculiar ethos. Since poets, as a rule, have belonged to this class, Marathi poetry has centered upon the emotional world of this group and has reflected its ways of thinking. The onset of World War II, against the background of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the national liberation movement and the spread of Socialist ideas in India, led some poets to write out of a new social awareness, sometimes with an explicit commitment to Marxist thought. Although he has never been a member of the Communist Party, Karandikar's early poetry shows this kind of commitment.

The title poem in Karandikar's first volume, *Swedaganga* (1949),[1] at times almost literally versifies Marxist dicta. Some of the poems in this volume fully live up to the demands of Socialist Realism. An ambitious poem here is the longist "*Majoor*" (Worker), in which Karandikar paints a picture of the mill-worker's typical day:

> Mills recline smoking pipes
> Filled with fresh tobacco of workers' flesh.

The worker himself is a living corpse which the capitalist mill exploits:

> Here burns the coal of workers' bones;
> Here on the steam of their sweat machines whirr;
> Carding their muscles here the thread is made;
> It is dyed in the blood of workers.

Along with this gaudy imagery goes a high-pitched rhetorical tone:

> Who is this human sacrifice for? Tell us, who is it for?
> Is he to end burning in this fire?

We have then the worker returning to his wretched house, "a temple of poverty." Finally, with nightfall he makes his way toward a speakeasy, where alone he finds for a few moments the freedom he has never tasted in life. This poem is rather too naively passionate, but in a few other poems in this first volume Karandikar takes a satirical look at the social condition. In "*Jaigopal*" he writes of the rich merchant who keeps the front door of his shop closed and sells sugar on the black market by the back door, a common feature of wartime life. The Marwai merchant's innocent-sounding greeting, "Jaigopal!" -- "Praise the Lord!" -- becomes the focal point of the satire. Poems of this kind are more satisfying than the exhortatory poems which, unfortunately, are more numerous in this volume.

The most interesting aspect of Karandikar's poems in this volume is his use of traditional imagery to argue his new theme. The title of the long opening poem, "*Swedaganga*" (A Ganges of Sweat), is itself significant. It gives the Marxist argument of the poem a quasi-religious coloring, what with the rich and ancient tradition associated with the holy river Ganges. Karandikar underlines the context of tradition in the opening section of the poem, in which he declares that his new Ganges has replaced the old. Later in the poem Karandikar evokes ancient mythology in greater detail:

> The poison of inequality is unbearable;
> The Shankara of Society is in a rage;
> A storm is blowing, the sea is in a fury;
> The drum of equality is sounding;
> The wild dance of Revolution is beating upon the earth.

Karandikar is here giving a new twist to tradition. The Marathi reader is familiar with the story of the god Shankara, or Shiva, who drank the poison churned out of the sea by the gods, who is famous for his fury, for his drum and his wild dancing, and who bore the Ganges in his hair. All this is here used to build a new allegory. Shankara himself becomes *samaj-shankara*, the Shankara of Society, and instead of his giving the Ganges shelter in his hair, it is the new Ganges of sweat that is going to save the *samaj-shankara* oppressed by the poison of inequality.

Karandikar uses this technique in other poems in *Swedaganga*. "*Holi*" is about the festival of that name, during which people light huge fires. In Karandikar's poem it is an occasion for burning old conventions and all that is rotten in society. In "*Kaliche sandesh*" (Messages of Kali) the fierce goddess Kali appears on earth to destroy all bondage and defend freedom. In another poem (*Pavitra majla*) the poet declares his faith:

> Holier the songs of joy and sorrow
>   Than all the *mantras* in the Veda,
> Holier the common man
>   Than Rama or Krishna.

Again the new faith is proclaimed in terms of "holiness," and with reference to ancient Hindu tradition. In "*Vishwarupa*" (A Vision of the Universe), Karandikar uses the classic situation that gave birth to the *Bhagavad Gita:* Arjuna unable to fight on the battlefield, and Krishna showing him the spectacle of the universe to move him to action. Karandikar's modern Krishna describes himself:

> Atomic power on my little finger,
> Brigades of machines on my forefinger,
> I carry the banner of civilization,
> I wear the earrings of magnificent art;
>
> In my mouth the Vedas
> Of Revolution eager for victory,
> On my head the eternal adornment
> Of Socialist peace.

The new Krishna reconciles science with art, and conflict with peace.

Karandikar's technique of presenting his Socialist thought through Hindu mythology invites a critical look. In the first place, one might suggest that this comes easier to him than it would to a poet brought up in a monotheist faith like Christianity or Islam. Polytheist Hinduism offers a poet like Karandikar varied material to draw upon, so that he can press into service various legends connected with deities such as Shankara, Krishna and Kali. More important is the question of the ideological soundness of this method. It might be said that, in using traditional mythology for his purposes, Karandikar is making his new ideas more acceptable, more easily accessible to his audience. It might be claimed that he is renovating old legends, giving them a new meaning. On the other hand, one might say that, in resorting to Hindu mythology, Karandikar betrays his ideology. The two are really at odds with each other. A true Marxist would have no use for these husks of an obsolete faith. To revert to them is an indication of weakness. We can see that Karandikar, a middle-class brahmin, is unable to cast off the tradition he was brought up in. He can attempt to make the new ideas his own only in terms of his cultural heritage. One has the feeling that, instead of old legends being rejuvenated, the new ideas are being deftly molded into traditional patterns.

The rift between Karandikar's ideas and his imagery indicates the kind of ambivalence that often characterizes a bourgeois poet who has embraced Marxist ideology. Yet, in certain poets this kind of tension can actually be a source of poetic power. A good example of this is the early poetry of W. H. Auden. Some of Auden's "revolutionary" poems of the early 1930s directly embody the predicament of the bourgeois sympathizer. The longish "1929,"[2] for instance, works out the agonizing choice of self-destruction which a bourgeois poet must make. He sympathizes with the coming change, but himself belongs to the dying society and knows that he must perish with it; he must choose "our death, / Death of the old gang." It is the tension between the opposing pulls that makes this poem compelling. In *Swedaganga* Karandikar does not show any awareness of such conflict. In his poems the conflict manifests itself unconsciously in the rift between the metaphors and the ideology they are meant to flesh out. If, instead of committing himself to a naive celebration of Marxist ideals, Karandikar had faced his own situation and written out of an awareness of the conflict between his traditional upbringing and the new ideas he was espousing, his poems in *Swedaganga* would have been much more moving.

In Karandikar's next volume, *Mridgandha* (1954), one comes across fewer poems which may be said to have a Marxist inspiration behind them. "*Yantravatar*" is a poem that follows the pattern of the poems discussed above, making use of traditional cultural material. The Machine is conceived of as an *avatar* of God, and the whole poem is an ecstatic invocation to this modern deity:

> Come in the guise of Brahma, Vishnu, or Shankara,
> Come chanting the Vedas of a new order. . . .

There is no direct Marxist argument in the poem; here Karakdikar is more oblique and suggestive than in the poems of his first volume. The Machine will come

> Furling red sails
> Over a red red sea
> Out of the red horizon.

The poem ends with a radically new version of an Upanishadic prayer, with the final line, "*Om krantih krantih krantih*" (*kranti* = revolution), being a new version of the traditional ending -- which Eliot used at the end of *The Waste Land* -- "*Shantih shantih shantih.*" In view of the lines about "red sails" above, the revolution celebrated here is clearly not an Industrial Revolution, but a Marxist revolution. Yet, Karandikar nowhere gives a specifically ideological slant to the poem, and works primarily on the level of bardic celebration. A similarly muted Marxist gesture is made in "*Mazya mana, ban dagad.*" "Be stone, O my mind," says the poet in the title line; that is the only possible response to the horrors of modern life that he portrays in the poem. But even this is a kind of fulfillment, for

> Listen to the hoofbeat! Listen to the sound!
> Red dust is flying today;
> Tomorrow the horseman will be here,
> Will polish his blade upon this stone!
> That's more than you could hope for:
> Be stone, O my mind!

Compared to the open statement of Marxist ideals in the early poems, the oblique gestures in these poems make them poetically more successful. What is of greater significance is that, after shedding his ideological brashness, Karandikar also delineates objective reality with deeper attention to specific detail. The ambitious longer poem, "*Tee janata amar ahe*," is rhetorical in places, but the platform speaker's tone is backed by a great mass of well-observed social detail. Karandikar speaks with fervor of the many ills of Indian society: the widow who has only the barber to satisfy her sexual desire with (orthodox brahmin widows must shave their heads); the untouchables who walk with spitoons around their necks, for they must not pollute the earth with their spittle; the strong-limbed shepherd who once killed two tigers with a mere sickle, but has to lick the village headman's feet for a few rupees; grain that rots in black-marketeers' cellars, and the cloth-mills that shower only soot upon the naked who live around.

Increasingly, Karandikar's eye is upon the unbearable reality he observes all around him. Ideological statement, or even metaphorical gestures toward "red sails" or "red dust," become scarce. In "*Ase kahi pahile ahe*" Karandikar writes:

> I have seen such things --
>   I have cracked up.
> Now I know: I have no words
> To speak of the immeasurable helplessness
> Simmering in the minds of men.

This is almost an admission that the poet no longer finds his ideology adequate to cope with what he has seen.

> In my heart too
> Stretches only the long shadow
> Of the poison tree of society.

Society is hopelessly corrupted. At the end of this poem there are no "red sails," no "red dust," only wasted blossoms and a cold grave.

In Karandikar's next volume, *Dhrupad* (1959), there are even fewer poems that could claim a Marxist orientation. "*Gath*" (The Knot)[3] in this volume portrays a sordid love relationship against the backdrop of war, inflation, strikes and retrenchment. It seems to be patterned after Auden's "A Bride in the 30's" and similar poems that juxtapose private relationships with public events. In the most recent volume, *Jatak* (1968), one comes across scarcely a poem which could be related to Karandikar's early ideological poems. From the beginning Karandikar had a strong leaning toward metaphysical speculation; this, and the reification of complex or brittle emotional states, become his chief concern in the later volumes. Indeed, many of Karandikar's best poems show no trace of the early Marxist influence. This is not necessarily a story of "the god that failed." The later development was in a sense predictable. The bourgeois poet gradually returns to his roots. In those early poems Karandikar's unconscious commitment was probably to his metaphors rather than to his ideas. In one of his most recent poems in *Jatak*, he writes of his experiences in the United States:

> . . . in the joyful dancing at night
> I saw many *gopis* with many Krishnas dancing the *rasa*,[4]
> And I was startled!
>
> ("*Hima-Yoga*")

But Karandikar's reader is not startled. His reader would almost expect Karandikar to see *gopis* and Krishnas at a western dance, as once he saw Socialism incarnated as Krishna. The context and the ideas may have changed; the basic myths have endured.

Narayan Surve has had a different kind of background. He is not of middle-class origin; he is not a brahmin. He spent his childhood in poverty, and, we are told, "literally grew up in the streets of Bombay."[5] He has had no formal education beyond primary school, which he finished when he was in his thirties. He has been an active Communist.

It is not surprising that in Surve's poems one hardly comes across the classical Hindu mythology which Karandikar resorts to when projecting his ideas. Surve lacks the sophistication and inventiveness of a poet like Karandikar, but his poems convey an authenticity of experience that is rare. When Surve speaks of the wretchedness of lower-class life his words ring true. Where a poet like Karandikar speaks from the outside, Surve speaks from inside the life he is talking about. Karandikar's poem, "*Majoor*," begins:

> Men who go to the smoke-laden mill area
> See this terrifying spectacle:

Karandikar writes as one who *goes* to the mill area to have a look, not as one who lives there. To Karandikar the worker is the third-person *he*; not so to Surve, who writes:

> As a boy I started carrying father's lunch to his loom
> I was shaped as a blacksmith shapes a hammer.

This is from Surve's long poem, "Bombay," in *Maze vidyapeeth*. One could compare it with Karandikar's poem on Bombay in *Swedaganga*. Karandikar builds a picture of broad contrasts: tall buildings and people living in the streets, well-stocked granaries and starving masses, giant cloth mills and the naked poor. This in four lines of verse, which are followed by a few lines of appropriate reflection. There is no observation of the living detail, no sense of life experienced. Surve's poem begins with the story of his upbringing as a mill-worker's son, with a father who beat mother on payday, and at whose loom the narrator himself was employed after father's death. The poem conveys the feel of the dirty, noisy and crowded streets of Bombay.

Surve has as yet published only two slim volumes of poetry: *Aisa ga mee brahma* (1961) and *Maze vidyapeeth* (1966). The poems in his first volume are rather uncertain, and often marred by his willingness to give in to middle-class reflexes and poetic conventions. Yet, in the opening lines Surve declares:

> I am a worker; I am a shining sword;
> O devotees of Saraswati! I going to commit a small crime.

He is aware that he is different from other poets, devotees of the goddess of learning, most of whom are middle-class. For an ill-educated worker like him to write poems is a crime, but the ironic phrase -- "a *small* crime" -- betrays his truculent self-confidence. Surve writes a number of poems relating to the coming change, now threatening the bourgeois, now hailing the bright new age, now speaking of his possible martyrdom before its dawn. But he is at his best when he writes plainly of personal relationships against the background of working-class life. In "*Mazi aai*" ("My Mother") he writes of his mill-worker mother. One day she is brought home bleeding, fatally injured at work:

That night the five of us
Clung to each other
Pulled the sheet over us
As if it were mother's love
We had nothing to begin with
Now mother isn't there either.

In another poem, the poet returns to his wife in a disheartened state, but

When your own eyes water, a cloud passes over my chest
My body becomes a shield, my hand a sword
It's daybreak outside, wet sunshine flutters in the room
Like chariot wheels my feet turn again toward the factory.

("*Galabalun jato tewha*")

Here is a direct statement of a very human experience. The image of "chariot wheels" lights up the genuine heroism of ordinary life.

The title of Surve's second volume, *Maze vidyapeeth* (My University), obviously derives from Gorky. The title poem is a loose, picaresque narrative of the poet's experiences in life, charged with a sense of helplessness before life's ruthless forces. One has seen heartbreaking things, but the final sentiment is one of willingness to fight one's way through life. Many of Surve's poems in this volume are far less strident than some of those in the first. While still concerned with outer reality, they are introspective and reflective to a certain extent:

We spent half our life looking for ourselves;
Turned a thousand times from ourselves, yet did not
    find ourselves.

("*Ek amhi ase nighalo*")

There is a kind of detachment here that goes beyond self-confident declarations of rebellion. At the same time, the poet does not lapse into limited subjectivity; he is speaking about *us*, not just about himself. Some of the poems that do not deal directly with a Marxist theme, and yet carry an undertone of the poet's basic faith, are particularly successful. "*Nehru gele tya welachi goeht*" (The Day Nehru Died)[6] is a kind of anecdote. The poet is wandering around the gray city on the day Nehru died:

"Hey Sundari, what happened?"
asks a whore.
"Don't burn incense tonight -- Nehru died!"
says the other.
"Really? We'll take a night off then!"

The poet walks on. He sees a street-hawker pushing a handcart with a paper lantern. "Why do you carry the light now?" the poet asks him.

"'Why?,' mister!
Darkness is baring its teeth ahead," he said.

The poem avoids the kind of predictable responses that the average middle-class Marathi poet would come up with, given an event like Nehru's death. There is no orgy of emotions, of images and comparisons. The event is placed against a background which a middle-class poet would not easily think of. The dialogue between the whores is in Hindi, and is thus set off against the standard Marthi of the poet's lines. This admixture of Hindi conveys the peculiar feel of low life in Bombay. Although the poem conveys the sadness of the loss, it is ultimately a statement of hope. The whores taking a night off from business -- a way of paying homage that might sound unusual to a middle-class mind -- shows the fineness of character one does not expect in a red-light district. Finally, the street-hawker with his frail paper lamp symbolizes the determination of the man in the street to go on with the struggle of life. There is no overt Marxist statement in the poem, but in the context of the poet's over-all work, one may deduce the faith that keeps the street-hawker going on after the loss of a great national leader.

Increasingly Surve seems to write poems that are not merely statements of ideological faith, but succeed as human documents as well. I quote in full a recent uncollected poem:

I do not want those melancholy evenings of yours anymore.

A while ago I came away from a concert;
I rose, melancholy, and came away --
The moon was down -- or shall I say,
It looked homeward -- or shall I say,
It was all faded with melancholy.

Flags of day started fluttering in the sky,
Started arriving in the city --
Or shall I say,
Started rearing their hooves
All over the city.

Jivba sat at the gate
On a bench,
The lantern at his side still burning;
He was counting money.

"Hey Jivba, why do you stay up so late?"
"We are the sort who eat fire and shit scorpions --
Don't give me that crap, I tell you."

Honestly, I do not any more want those melancholy
evenings of yours.[7]

The poem is, in effect, a rejection of bourgeois society; but it is a quiet, gracious rejection. It is notably free of the invective and passion that often go with such denunciation. Surve voices his disillusionment with the bourgeois indulgence in melancholy moods. His description of daybreak is subtly ironic. There is the wordy repetition of "Shall I say," and the elaborate, really unnecessary alternative phrases to describe the setting moon and the sunrise. To add to the romantic aura of the whole thing, there is the medievalism of flags and horses invading the city. Against this deliberate pampering of bourgeois taste, we have the unexpectedly strong and vulgar words of Jivba. The contrast is more powerful in the original, where Jivba's words are in Konkani. (This is comparable to the use of Hindi in "The Day Nehru Died" to set off one social context against another.) After the "poetic" involutions of the earlier lines, Jivba's words come as a blast of rough reality. There is also the situational contrast of the poet coming home from a concert and Jivba counting his earnings after a long day's work. With mature reticence, Surve does not say in so many words that he identifies himself with Jivba's sort of people and their problems; he merely tells us that he no longer finds *our* musical nights interesting. Since most of Surve's readers would be middle-class, the collective *you* of the poem is implicitly directed at the reader. The poem is meant to make the reader uncomfortable, but gently, very gently.

A question for consideration is whether this gentleness indicates a maturity of outlook, or a "softening" toward The Establishment. Now that he is a successful poet, is Surve acquiescing and sliding into bourgeois postures? Let us look at another uncollected poem called "Karl Marx":

This is how I met Marx on my very first strike:
I had his banner on my shoulder
Right in the middle of the procession.
Elder sister Janaki said:
"You know him --
That's our Marcus-*baba*;
Was born in Germany; wrote a sackful of books,
And went to dust in England.
What is it to somebody
Who has renounced everything?
To him it's the same everywhere.
He too had a handful of kids, like you."

Then, I was once speaking at a rally:
"So what's the cause of this recession?
What's at the root of poverty?"
Again, it was Marx came up; said,
"I'll tell you," and helf forth beautifully.

The other day he was there at a rally
Before a factory gate, listening.
I said: "Now we are the heroes
Of history, of all future biographies."
It was he who clapped hands loud;
Laughing heartily, he came up
And placed his hand on my arm and said:
"Well, looks like you write poems?
That's beautiful --
I too used to like Goethe, you know."

We see here a strong tendency toward underscoring the humanness of Marx. Marx becomes "Marcus-*baba*": *baba* is a tag often suffixed to the names of holy men in India; Marx then joins the ranks of the many holy men of India. That he is a sage or a saint is also emphasized by the reference to his renunciation of worldly things, in the manner of the sages of old. He is then domesticized by pointing out that he had "a handful of kids," like everyone else. Finally, there is the jolly, back-slapping Marx who reminds us that he too is capable of appreciating literature, that the rigors of Revolution have not made him insensitive to Culture. Marx emerges as a kindly, paternal old man. What the poem tries to do is to project, not Marx the revolutionary, but Marx the human being. There could be no objection to this, of course. But we also see that the poem makes only perfunctory gestures toward the revolutionary ideal. Surve's problem is to preserve the revolutionary spirit along with the humanizing tendency. He will write truly powerful Marxist poems only when he is able to sustain the intensity of both in his poems. Although not exactly young in age, he is young as a poet, and it is possible that he might make such a singular contribution to Marathi literature.

FOOTNOTES

1. My references are to the second edition of 1958. The four books by Vinda Karandikar and the two by Narayan Surve discussed in this paper are all published by Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

2. W. H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* (London: Faber, 1966), p. 34.

3. A translation of this poem will be found in *An Anthology of Marathi Poetry (1945-1965)*, ed. Dilip Chitre (Bombay: Nirmala Sadanand Publishers, 1967), p. 103.

4. The *rasa* is a kind of circular dance, chiefly associated with Krishna.

5. Biographical note in *An Anthology of Marathi Poetry*, p. 196.

6. A translation of this poem will be found in *An Anthology of Marathi Poetry*, p. 179.

7. Published in *Mauj* (Diwali Number, 1969), p. 13.

PRAGATĪVĀD IN PANJABI LITERATURE

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Pragtīvād (Progressivism) as a literary movement in Panjabi, as in other Indian literatures, began with the major young Panjabi writers' commitment to the program adopted by the Indian Progressive Writers' Association in its first meeting at Lucknow in 1936. But, unlike the writers of some other languages, such as Urdu, Hindi, English, Bengali, etc., it seems no writer of Panjabi was directly involved in the organization of this meeting. Some Panjabis, such as Mulk Raj Anand, did play an important part in the very inception of the movement in Europe and others, like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, helped in gathering support for the manifesto of the Association carried to the Panjab by Sajjad Zaheer in early 1936. But these writers did not write in Panjabi. In fact, the purpose of Sajjad Zaheer's visit to the Panjab appears to have been to get the cooperation of the Urdu writers there.[1] Writers of Panjabi began to be drawn into the Progressive circle gradually. They did so partly as a result of the literary influence from Urdu, but mainly as a consequence od direct involvement with Socialist, political activity or exposure to the journalistic and other literature propagating this activity. Though eventually Panjabi Progressive writing saw itself as a part of a larger literary movement, its first impluse came from the work of the Panjab Kisan Sabha, or farmers' organization, in which a leading role was played by Sohan Singh Josh, the editor of *Parbhāt*,[2] and Hira Singh Dard, the editor of *Phulwāṛī*.[3] The work of these leaders and there writing were, ultimately, a continuation of the revolutionary movement of the first quarter of the twentieth century. In the mid-twenties, the revolutionary tendencies were gaining a new vigor again. The literary ferment started by this renewed revolutionary fervor in the Panjabi was reinforced by and found its articulation in the rationale of the Progressive Movement. By the late thirties, promising Panjabi writers began to show alignment with the movement.

The chief centers of literary activity in the Panjab in the mid-thirties were the two metropolises of the state, Lahore and Amristsar, but in its impact on Panjabi literature, a new community, Preetnagar, not far from either of these towns, established and organized by Gurbakhsh Singh, was also of great significance. Gurbakhsh Singh, who had spent some time in the United States as a student, had returned to India fired by an idealism fostered by the American ideals of self-reliance and improvement. He wanted to create around him an appropriate environment for a more meaningful human life than the prevailing Indian situation. The attainment of his goals required immense personal, as well as social, changes, though Gurbakhsh Singh's main stress was on the development of individual awareness and character. He founded Preetnagar to put his ideas into practice. It was mainly an educational center for the young, but with a view to make education more effective and to apply it to life.

Though only a few Panjabi intellectuals and artists became resident members of this community, almost all serious Panjabi writers were drawn into Gurbakhsh Singh's circle and eventually, Preetnagar itself produced many. Besides running a school, Gurbakhsh Singh had his own press and a monthly magazine, *Prītlaṛī* (Love Link) which still continues and has made a tremendous contribution to and exercised a great influence on Panjabi writing. Gurbakhsh Singh and *Prītlaṛī* were of crucial importance in helping Progressivism ferment in Panjabi literature, though they did not become its main current.

With the Panjabi writers' involvement in the Progressive Movement, Lahore, Amritsar and Preetnagar became the three centers of Progressive literary activity in Panjabi. By a combination of circumstances, Amritsar proved to be the most important of them all. As mostly in the past, then too, Lahore was the political as well as the cultural capital of the Panjab. But because of historical, political and religious reasons, Panjabi, though the native language of its entire population, was not the official regional language of the state and its educational institutions, As a consequence, it was not the main language of its cultural life either. It had, by this time, already become more or less completely identified with one of the Panjabi minorities, the Sikhs. Particularly in the *gurmukhī* script, and as a literary medium, it was almost exclusively their language. Even when used in journalism and for proselytizing and propagandist purposes by government and other agencies, it was a vehicle for reaching mainly the Sikh population. Since Amritsar, rather than Lahore, was the religious capital of the Sikhs, literary activity in Panjabi at Lahore lagged behind that at Amritsar. This was not merely because, due to the circumstances, Panjabi writing had begun to be sectarian (which certainly was the case), but also because Panjabi as a written language as such and particularly as a literary medium was preserved chiefly by families with relatively serious Sikh religious convictions. Even when they retained only a purely literary legacy in Panjabi, they had been able to do so because of their proximity to the literary and linquistic heritage of their religion. The situation was aggravated by the fact that many writers of Sikh origin, when they did not write merely as Sikhs, had a tendency to choose a language other than Panjabi in order to reach a wider audience. Thus, though it was primarily the Sikh writers who used Panjabi, not all the Sikhs did so. One's connection with Sikhism had to be very strong to require him to adopt Panjabi as his chief medium of communication. Proximity to Sikhism was a crucial factor in determining the importance of a place or a person in regard to the course of Panjabi literature. Under these circumstances, it was natural that Panjabi literary activity as Lahore should have been less intense than at Amritsar.

This explains why *pragtīvād* in Panjabi, in spite of its being a fundamentally anti-religious movement did not find its most important axis in Lahore. It is true that, in the early stages, the relatively more secular atmosphere of Lahore helped the most central impluse of *pragtīvād*; that is, the political-economic emphasis surfaced more clearly there than at any other place. But for want of a strong link with the literary heritage of Panjabi which, under the circumstances, could be made mainly through association with Sikhism, this impulse tended to produce sentimentality or superficial polemicism instead of attaining a genuine literary expression. This is not to say that Lahore did not make any significant contribution to the *pragtīvād* Movement in Panjabi. On the contrary, some of its most eminent and representative writers started writing there. But the fact remains that it was by gravitating to the nucleus of the movement at Amritsar that they truly became a part of it. The spirit that brought the writers at Lahore together, though a strong social and political impetus, remained just that. They had started by forming a circle around Hira Singh Dard of the Panjab Kisan Sabha. Dard's own writing is considerable in bulk. It is charged with dedication to the political cause and has been influential in the work of the revolutionary movement in the Panjab; but his aims were not literary. Writers with serious interest in literature, Progressive or not, found other directions.

One must, however, be careful not to overstress the differences between the writers at Lahore and Amritsar because, physically, the two groups were not very far apart and, after all, they were responding to the same Progressive trends. Moreover, some of the writers at Lahore had as strongly religious family backgrounds as was possible. The important thing to notice here is the centrality of Amritsar and of Sikhism in a writer's background in modern Panjabi literature and *pragtīvād*. Somewhat paradoxically, the religious, even anti-religious, *pragtivādī* Panjabi writing was possible because of the writers' strong connection with the Sikh community, a connection which often included a strong commitment to the community. Though this commitment had to be eventually transcended or merged with the wider commitment to the nation or all mankind, such a notion had to be there to begin with.

It is true the reason for Gurbaksh Singh's failure to become the central figure in the Progressive Movement was that his writing remained reformist, never becoming truly revolutionary. Yet the dissociation from religion, implicit in his thinking and practice, also seems to have been a considerable factor in depriving him of a vital involvement with any particular community without whose weight behind him, his writing could not attain an overwhelming force. Without commitment to a close-knit, established community, he seemed to land in the vacuum of a vague idealism, failing, in spite of his great talent, to achieve for his art a much-needed anchor in reality. For strong emotional and physical involvement with a living community is essential for a sound literary outlook and creation of any kind, but it is of the utmost importance in a literary endeavor consciously aimed at the progress of society as *pragtīvād* was.

Khalsa College, Amritsar, provided its students and faculty an atmosphere in which one was closely related to the Sikhs, yet was not unduly shackled by the connection. The college had been established by the Sikhs as part of their involvement with the British. Its aim was to prepare the Sikhs to receive their due share in the gradual transfer of political and administrative responsibility from British to Indian hands. It was to the Sikhs what Benares Hindu University was to the Hindus and the Moslem University at Aligarh was to the Moslems. Being endowed by Sikhs, it was bound to have some religious bias and there was indeed a tendency to persecute those who, while associated with it, openly flouted or undermined the religious tenets of Sikhism. Yet it was an institution of higher secular learning, so persecution on purely religious grounds was resorted to only in extreme cases and, more often than not, it was caused more by personal or factional reasons than anything else. The institution's connection with Sikhism was basically cultural, not religious. Except in narrow communal politics, it did not by itself clash with the wider commitment to nationalism or mankind, or with an independent, original, secular outlook on life in general. As a matter of fact, it simply served as a base for one's personal growth and, through it, provided an impetus to grow further into the open world. For literary growth, it proved to be a very wholesome factor, providing on the one hand, the close personal involvement necessary for vitality in literature, and on the other, an individual outlook which, because of its secularity, encouraged universality, equally important in liberating the artist from the influence of convention and making his experience truly original. Here was an atmosphere in which one was mourished by a sense of belonging, but was not necessarily forced to give up thinking or feeling for himself. In view of its rather liberal, and therefore liberating, connection with Sikhism, and because of the increasing identification of Panjabi with the Sikhs, it is not surprising that Khalsa College produced the leading forces in the growth of the twentieth-century Panjabi literature, a literature written mostly by the Sikhs, but not merely a Sikh literature. Since *pragtīvād* in Panjabi came at a time when the stream of modern secular Panjabi literature had barely begun to flow again, it found its firm root in the very soil in which modern Panjabi literature had found its major inspiration. The guiding spirit of *pragtīvād* in Panjabi literature came from Khalsa College, Amritsar.

To point out the significance of Khalsa College and Sikhism in *pragtīvād* is not to minimize the individual contribution of its foremost exponent in Panjabi, Sant Singh Sekhon, because ultimately without individual effort, circumstances, however favorable to a particular development, do not amount to much. Still it is not too much to say that his connection with Khalsa College as a member of its faculty gave Sant Singh Sikhon an atmosphere and an identity which channelized his zeal and talent, making him, thus, the very hinge around which *pragtīvād* in Panjabi revolved. It is significant that in the circle of Progressive writers at Amritsar in the late thirties and early forties were many writers other than Sikhs, including Dr. Muhammuddin Tasir, Mahmuduz Zafar and his wife Rashid Jahan, and the budding poet of Urdu, Faiz Ahmed Faiz.[4] Sant Singh Sekhon himself had written in English and Urdu, but soon changed to and settled on Panjabi. It is a mark of his insight that he did so because it was by this choice that he achieved his real identity. Without it, his work would not have acquired the representational quality which gives it life and a central importance in modern Panjabi literature in general and *pragtīvād* in particular. All Progressive writers, directly or indirectly, have been influenced by him.

Still, before independence, the lasting significance of Sekhon's work as a Progressive was only implicit and not yet fully realized. Lahore, Preetnagar and Amritsar remained the main centers of Progressive writing, with Khalsa

College tending to be the focal point of the movement. After independence, with greater recognition given to Panjabi by the government in the Indian part of the Panjab and its greater importance and inclusion in the higher education curriculum, Khalsa College, due to its superior facilities for the study of Panjabi, became unequivocally the most important place for the study and creation of Panjabi literature. The Panjabi department of Panjab University, of which Sekhon was a faculty member, was located here. It led the way in Progressive and other literary criticism for about a decade. Panjabi writing and studies expanded rapidly and by the mid-fifties Panjabi literary activity became so widespread in the Panjab and Delhi that it ceased to have any one controlling center. By this time Sekhon too had left Amritsar. But he continued to be and still remains the most conspicuous, if not the leading, Progressive critic in Panjabi, although the Progressive Movement in a specific sense may be said to have come to an end by the late fifties.

By its very nature, the Progressive Movement was to manifest itself more directly in literary criticism than in creative writing. It assigned to literature a clear function, and, therefore, a criterion of evaluation. Its mandate was of particular significance in Panjabi because Panjabi literary criticism was still in its infancy. There had been no critical writing worth its name before the second decade of the twentieth century. About the time Progressive influence penetrated Panjabi, Teja Singh of Khalsa College, Amritsar, was the pre-eminent Panjabi critic. His criticism was wide-ranging. It touched on Panjabi literature from its very beginning to the present. It was constructive in the sense that it drew people's attention to Panjabi literature. Almost invariably admiring, it gave the younger writers great confidence and thus helped the growth of Panjabi literature immensely. But it was utterly without system and devoid of a theoretical basis. It represented the state of Panjabi literary criticism in general. The Progressive Movement gave Panjabi literary criticism a definite direction for the first time. Not that a systematic theory of literature was inherent in the Progressive goals as such. In themselves, these goals only assigned a purpose to literature. Though some suggestions about the nature of literature are implicit in the very assignment of this purpose, and understanding of the nature of literature was not really the premise from which the Progressive writing proceeded. Its chief concern was to fight against oppression in society. It did not address itself to the literary process as such. One may even say that the Progressive writers imposed their social goals on literature rather arbitrarily; at least they did so in the beginning. However, they soon found everywhere a literary justification for their social use of literature in light of Karl Marx's dialectical materialism. Literature was seen as embodying the values and interests of particular classes in society. As society progressed through class conflict, only that literature was wholesome or Progressive which represented the values and interests of the class which, at the time of the literary creation, provided the Progressive impluse in society. It followed, therefore, that the contemporary writer, to be a good writer, should reflect the interests of the class striving towards a better future for mankind. He could do this either by merely exposing the reactionary nature of the values of the declining class or the triumph of the rising class or both. The purpose was to make the reader see the direction of the historical movement and align himself with it. The same criterion was to be used to analyze and judge past literature. The relationship between literature and social reality, including the material base on which it was founded, was to be studied not only in the content of literature, but also in its form. The esthetic aspects of a work of literature were as much derived from a class bias as its ideational or emotional message. Thus here was a framework for a complete theory of literature describing its genesis, nature and function and giving direction for its creation and evaluation. To Panjabi, which at its best was just groping for a literary theory, oscillating between the intensely mystical approach of Puran Singh and the vague and fragmented romanticism of Teja Singh, it came as a boon. Through Sant Singh Sekhon, it entered Panjabi literary criticism and became its very bedrock.

In Sekhon's own words, "In Panjabi, modern consciousness about the purpose and form of literature was brought by the Progressive Movement."[5] Tracing the origins of the movement, he describes the aims of the Progressive writers in India as agreed upon in their 1936 meeting at Lucknow:

> 1. Opposition to imperialism, because British imperialism was at that time depriving the Indian people from national independence.
>
> 2. Opposition to feudalism, because it was not only an obstacle in the economic development and emancipation of the Indian people, but, to safeguard its interests, it also acted as a lackey and supporter of British imperialism against the Indian people.
>
> 3. Opposition to blind faith in religion, which was a fetter made of century-old feelings and ideas and hindered every modern, Progressive thought.
>
> 4. Opposition to caste and untouchability . . .
>
> 5. Opposition to communalism . . .
>
> 6. Opposition to the exploitation of women . . .
>
> 7. Uplift and emancipation of the Indian peasantry . . .
>
> 8. Uplift and emancipation of the Indian laborers. Although, at that time, Indian Progressivism had not made opposition to Indian capitalism one of its aims, because Indian capitalism, according to its interests, was opposed to British imperialism; yet it could not be allowed to exploit the working class ruthlessly . . .
>
> 9. As a whole, freeing Indian thinking from fatalism and superstition to make it follow reason and logic.[6]

These goals give a general direction to literature. They do not necessarily imply a systematic theory of literature to support them. There had been some pressure from writers with Marxian leanings to have such theory accepted by all the participants in the movement even during its incipient stage and at the 1935 International Congress of Writers in Paris. But it was only gradually that this actually did happen. In the process Progressivism acquired a specific, predominantly Marxist orientation and many writers who had been actively engaged in the rise of the movement could not now be called Progressive. According to Sekhon, "It was in India that the name Progressive came to be fully applied to this movement."[7] Like most of his fellow Progressives, especially those writing in Urdu, Sekhon found the basis of his literary theory in Marx's historical materialism. He has been active in politics since the late thirties, has always had Communist affiliations and has twice contested elections for high office on a Communist ticket. It was natural that as a writer he should have become a Progressive. But Progressive writing for him is not crass propaganda. He sees literature in its relation to the dialectical movement of history. The historical movement produces literature and is, in turn, affected by it. In this process literary activity is determined by and plays a role in determining the course of politics. Though related thus to politics and other processes going on in the total flux of the historical movement, like any other significant human activity, literature has a distinct existence of its own. Its relationship to other activities and processes in the social dialectic does not necessarily imply its subordination to them. Though keenly involved in politics and acutely aware of the relationship between literature and politics, Sekhon is primarily concerned with literature. Moreover, though his view of literature is basically Marxian, it is not a matter of simply borrowing. It is corroborated, deepened, even modified by his study of Indian and Western (particularly English) literature, and by his personal experience and insight. As all these factors combine to make his views on literature original, they also give these views an ambivalence and complexity characteristic of a serious attitude towards life and literature instead of one that is sentimental or propagandistic, the common product of an arbitrary, unthinking commitment of literature to non-literary goals.

Sekhon has summed up the literary principles he developed and applied during his writing career in *Sāhitārath* (Theory of Literature) published in 1957. That the book was not written at an earlier time during the two decades of Sekhon's writing career is no disadvantage. It only shows that his views were not a foregone conclusion, but the result of a creative process. Yet, considering Sekhon's stature as a critic, the book is somewhat disappointing in other ways. It deals only with poetry, assuming the generalizations made about poetry as valid for all geneses of literature. Despite this curtailment of the subject, the book appears to be written very hurriedly. The prose is often turgid and frequently the arguments are not fully developed. Though limited to poetry, the treatment is still too sketchy to do justice to all the aspects of poetry touched upon. Yet, at least in part, this quality of incompleteness is due to the very depth and complexity of Sekhon's thinking, which requires much more time and space for full exposition than given to this volume. As it is, *Sāhitārath* succeeds in giving an inkling of the complexity of Sekhon's position and a brief outline of his ideas about literature and art.

Sāhitārath opens with a description of the nature, function and genesis of the arts:

> These [the fine arts] are not utilitarian. . . . They are not the basic arts of man, but a part of the superstructure of his spiritual, social life.
>
> But from this, it should not be construed that they are merely spiritual, that is, their relation is only with the soul, a misconception that has prevailed in our society uptil now. Spiritual life is, in fact, only a part of the social. It does not exist beyond society and the world. It is but the finer part of social life . . . the part that is connected with human intelligence, emotions and aspirations. Intelligence and these emotions and aspirations shape human action in every sphere, including the economic. In other words, although the spiritual life is a part of the superstructure of human life, it also influences the fundamental human action, the economic action. Or one may say that social life has two sides, utilitarian and fine, i.e., economic and spiritual, and they are not at all divorced or separated from each other, but have many kinds of mutual influences.
>
> Therefore, art has been called a social action. But this does not make art an exceptional thing. Instead, it gives art a more ordinary meaning. But at present, it is necessary to give art this ordinary meaning, because the old views in our society, by making art a purely fine and spiritual essence, have reduced its ordinariness and proper worth in human life. It is clear that if art is without great value in ordinary life, it will end up being an act of mere entertainment or a spiritual act related not to the daily but to the next life. In this manner, it will become a part of the life of either kings or saints, not the common man. This is an aberrative, life-destroying view. . . . The role of art or poetry in inciting man to fight or to some other action, our ruling class has known from the beginning. That is why it has given honor and employment to *bhats*, poets, etc. in the royal courts. . . .[8]

Looking for the beginnings of art, he finds them in the life of primitive man, who created art as a help in his struggle for existence:

> So, in joint human work, that is social action, art has always been helpful in creating rhythm for basic physical effort. . . . The very purpose of primitive art was to achieve an objective. And perhaps the fundamental objective is the attainment of love. But when life becomes more social, human goals become more social too. . . . Dance

> and music are appropriate acts for expressing happiness and pleasure on the successful completion of a joint action. . . . The joint-entertainment act succeeding achievement began to be performed before it. In this manner, art, starting as a rhythmic movement in time, became the pleasure of achievement, and still later began to be considered a means of achievement, and thus, becoming more than an inevitable part of pure economic life, it began to be seen as an essential part of the higher social life. Then, as this higher reality of social life became more multifarious and complex, the form and content of art also evolved further.
>
> Lamenting and crying over the loss of a dear object should also be considered a basic human action. . . . Crying over the loss of a precious object began to be considered a means of its recovery. So not only in triumph, in defeat and sorrow too, art became a need. Creating an illusion of achievement, art became a helpful means of achievement. It became a social art.
>
> Later, art did not remain just a helpful tool for achievement by merely creating an illusion of it. It became an action producing the appropriate psychological condition in man for achievement, a means of conditioning human emotions and mental attitudes, a method of emotional, intellectual and educational, and thus, still more useful, social action. This social capacity of art has been recognized even by class societies to this day. But in the new, Socialist society, its role is believed to be of really great value. For this reason, there, the development of art has not remained only the work of the artists and people and organizations interested in it, it is considered to be the task of society and state.[9]

The process by which art comes into being and performs its function is not always a completely conscious and deliberate process devised by man simply through cereberation. Deep and unconscious elements in the human make-up play a vital role in artistic creation. That is why Sekhon greatly stresses the importance of the artist's experience in relation to his work. By experience he implies the total reality a man is in contact with or is made up of and the entire range of responses this reality arouses in him. To be genuine, and hence effective, art must be born out of the depth of experience. "In poetry that is considered fine and powerful, nine times out of ten, the distinctive element is that of experience."[10] As to its nature, "Human experience is a very subtle and complex thing. In it, ordinary intellect, emotions, aspirations, imagination and other faculties of the mind, all interact."

It seems that it is because of the subtle nature of experience that the formal aspects of art are as significant as its content. Sekhon insists on the need for a rhythmic form in poetry. "As regards form, poetry and measure are two names for the same thing. Only metrical composition is poetry, as only a person with the female sex is a woman."[11]

As experience determines the ability of the artist to create, it is also the fundamental factor determining the ability to appreciate art:

> It is not enough that a poet have a particular kind of experience; it is also necessary that the readers, buyers and critics of his poetry should have it.
>
> The necessity of this parallelism in experience does not have a particularly bad effect on the dissemination of poetry or literature. Quite often it is rather the secret of the variegated nature of a society, and a sign of the richness of that society and its literature. Of course, at a time when a particular circle is dominant in society, the literateur or poet of that circle dominates.[12]

A writer must always write from his own experience:

> The problem arises only in a situation where a poet writes poetry for a circle of which he has no experience. . . . Many times, inspite of apparent qualities, some poets do not come into eminence, or at least, they do not receive much recognition from the two or three dominant circles of their time. The reason is that either they do not have enough experience about the great issues of life or, under some delusion, write poetry about what is outside their experience. . . . For want of revolutionary experience, many times, even very popular and dominant poets of the middle class cannot satisfy the revolutionary circles. It is ideal if a poet writing revolutionary poetry has real experience of revolutionary work. But sometimes, if he is facing the problems of life courageously and is not much committed to the care of middle-class interests, he will also achieve his purpose.[13]

The deficiences of the pre-modern literature are actually the deficiences in the writers' experience:

> In old poetry, experience was not so vast as in the modern. One reason for this was that the old poetry was largely the poetry of the upper classes. The experience of the upper classes is not the complete experience of life; it is only the experience of a few aspects of it. It must be admitted that the upper classes of the past had a keen

> experience of love and political or personal strife. Therefore, their literature was quite effecitve when it reflected these experiences; for stance, in the *Ramāyana*, it became truly great. But this experience, whether of the life of a class or of political struggle or of love, does not measure up to the criteria of a thoughtful person today. If the theme is war, it is the war of princes and divinities; if it is love, it is the love of princes and princesses or that of sages, princes and celestial nymphs. Therefore, in this struggle and in this love, the description of the supernatural, the miraculous and the marevelous abounds and realism is wanting.
>
> The experience of political strife and love, which the upper classes have, is also not enduring nor is it shared by the whole class. Only a few have it and seldom. Except for these rare occasions, most writers have it only in a transient, conventional manner, through imagination. Therefore, in such a society, some stories and tales become universally popular and writers go on wielding their pens according to these models for generations.[14]

In contrast, the modern experience of man is fuller. "In today's society, at least in the Socialist society, love is not a rebellion, it is only a psychological inclination. . . . The main theme of literature today is life, or more explicitly, work. In today's society, the very meaning of life is work."[15]

Though the experience necessary for the creation of art does not comprise mere mental perception, such perception is a significant part of it. Intellect is the guiding force in the organization of experience and its expression in art. Intellect is necessary for bringing home to man clearly the very need for art and to give a clear direction to its meaning and purpose. Without it art is impossible. There are many elements in human nature beyond the grasp of reason which are responsible for the genesis of art and are, in turn, affected by it; yet art is a conscious act. Intellectual meaning is an indispensable part of the content of art:

> For poetic excellence, metrically arranged words also need other qualities. First among these are, surely, reason and intellect, for no creation, poetry or prose, without reason and intellect, means much for man. . . . This needs to be emphasized here because our declining capitalistic society has also made it a slogan that art does not need reason. Instead, being free from reason, it reveals a superior kind of absolute reality.[16]

Indispensable as intellect is to art, it is not the dominant element in human experience and its artistic expression:

> Experience is the combination of those subconscious feelings, suggestions and thought-images which arise in a man's mind under the influence of an ideology or emotive tradition and, if he is a poet, he expresses them by bringing them to the conscious level through his art or poetry. Conscious thought would not have much place in this combination. Predominance should be of feelings and thought-images. Feelings accord with the prevailing or a long and continuous tradition, thought-images combining with it give it newness. . . . It seems somewhat futile to talk about newness in feelings. Human feelings have been in the making, deepening, growing complex and fine, since ancient times. The greatest role in their evolution is that of history; next to it that of religion and ethics, then of art and literature and, last of all, of ideas.[17]

Reason in art is important not so much for its own sake but because of its effect on the totality of experience, in its power to sharpen, organize, expand and communicate it. To be artistic, individual experience must merge with the wider experience of mankind. Only by this union, art achieves its proper, that is social, function. The means effecting the union is intellect. Intellectual awareness of the personal and the universal experience is essential for the artist to be fully attuned to reality at any point in history:

> The evolving, forming reality is but a form, a part of the present. The bases of its imagined form are the ideas, aims and ideals of and evolving from the present. Therefore, for poetry, the knowledge of the present is essential. This knowledge, in turn, depends on the experience and action of the poet. But for the purpose of poetry, personal experience is not enough. Poetry requires the imaginative elaboration of this personal experience. And the imaginative complex in itself is dependent on intellect. Thus imagination and experience are but faculties associated with the intellect. Experience is the product of the union of reality and intellect, and imagination that of experience and intellect, though to describe their relationship in this manner seems artificial and mechanical.[18]

Great minds can achieve contact with the wide human reality because of their superior character and ability but the contact rather than superior intelligence and integrity is the secret of their artistic greatness.

"The purer a poet is in his action and the more powerful, vast, and sharp his experience is, the better his creation will be. The composition of *bāṇī* [divine poetry of the Sikh gurus] is for this very reason, generally of high order. But many times . . . ordinary men and women also produce very good poetry or art. Perhaps this surprise is only superficial."[19] But no matter how refined a poet's experience and character may be, his writing will not be effective if he fails to participate in the larger experience of society. Human reality is social in nature. Without relevance to the common experience of society, even poetry of the highest spiritual order is without significance. The poet establishes full contact with reality only through the experience of the group. Genuine poetry is born out of his response to this reality. It gives man the right direction in his confrontation with reality. The greatest spiritual poetry owes its greatness to the poets' participation in life's struggle.

> In our history, the great poets of the *bhagtī* [devotional] period occupy a high place. Bhagat Kabir, Meera Bai, Guru Nanak were not merely pious individuals, they faced the problems and difficulties of the life of their time with great courage. Thus the proof of their spiritual superiority is in the history of the people's life struggle. Even people who do not believe in the reality of a divine, spiritual experience, agree that anyone who shows courage in the strife of life possesses a high, spiritual experience. . . . An atheist too can be spiritually great. . . . To oppose a powerful tyrant is not mere physical work; it is the work of a great soul. . . . Of course, the revolutionaries cannot accept the greatness of those "great souls" [quotes added] who support imperialism, the people's enemies, the rajas and the capitalists, and boasting about God's love, keep happy, seeing God's reflection in the fountains, palaces and gardens and exhort people to be happy with them. That spiritual experience, which has no meaning in the social context, or which, blind to the good and evil in society, preaches renunciation, is useless for literature or any social art. Such experience will be valued only by those classes which want to keep mankind ignorant about the good and evil in society.[20]

Thus conceived in the total human context, art is a valid guide in human life. The assumption is that, ultimately, what is good for all mankind is good for the individual. Genuine art by its very definition is Progressive. Throughout history good poets have been Progressive. "As long as a class is Progressive and leads the entire society in this progress, the experience of the representative individuals of this class is Progressive, all-embracing."[21] At the present juncture of history, the fundamental element in human experience is the rise of Socialism, its evolution and realization of its urgency. Today to be Progressive, literature must be Socialistic!

> Today's collective experience is Socialistic. Capitalism is undergoing a crisis which is not likely to be resolved. . . . Even towards the end of the nineteenth century, perspicacious writers had noticed the decline of capitalism. They had seen the economic system and the ethics and religion built on it in the capitalistic society starting to collapse. . . . But these writers did not have an intimation of the coming of Socialism, or it was very dim. . . . Now people realize that after demolishing the capitalistic system, it is possible to establish the Socialist system in its place. The writers of Soviet Russia are even experiencing the building of this system. Outside Russia, too, the writers participating in Socialist, egalitarian, and revolutionary work have begun to have a similar experience. Now an intelligent person without faith in the irrevocability of Socialism would be rare. But outside the Socialist countries, it is difficult for a writer to have the Socialist experience unless he takes part in revolutionary action. Therefore, in capitalist countries, along with the Socialist literature, literature of some other kinds of experience is also being produced.[22]

Such, in summary, is Sekhon's view of Progressive literature. Clearly, it is a biased view. But it must be noticed that it does not reduce literature to a tool that may be easily manipulated for narrow political ends. It sees an organic relationship between literature and the historical process. Great art cannot be created from the superficial thinking or interests of a few individuals divorced from the total experience of society. The literary process cannot be controlled by merely mental machinations. It is governed by much deeper forces in the nature and history of man and society. This is why Sekhon emphasises the importance of the formal and those other aspects of poetry that are not purely ideational. He considers metaphor as essential to poetry; and metaphor is genuine only when spontaneously delivered by the poet's experience instead of being deliberately devised:

> So long as imagination, passion, feeling and thought are linked with experience, the metaphor is powerful. But when this connection breaks, metaphor becomes insipid and weak. Abstract metaphor is often prone to this weakness. Taking thought alone, the poet compares it with things in which the real or imagined experience of the thought is impossible.[23]

The role of the non-rational in art is crucial. Without embodying the non-rational, art accomplishes little that cannot be accomplished by simple rational exposition. If Sekhon stresses the importance of the rational in art, it is because, in the past, the importance of reason in art has not been given due recognition, and even today the existence of the non-rational in art is used to mystify instead of elucidating the nature and function of art. Moreover, at this point in history, human knowledge has advanced to a degree that has increased the role of intellect immensely in every human activity.

So it is sound theory and policy to point out the importance of the intellectual element in art. There has always been, and still is, an existence of the mysterious in human experience and art. But humanity should confront and cope with the mysterious and not lose itself in it. Sekhon is encouraged by his observation that man has learnt to use his understanding increasingly in this manner:

> Rational expression is the warp of poetry and the irrational, suprarational, or semi-rational its woof. . . . In the future, poetry, though it may have as large a part in people's life as prose and mostly do what prose does today, especially in the area of social science, will still retain its peculiar character. It is clear that this special character will not be the secretive one of today.[24]

Human concern is only with that which is palpably within man's experience. "The experience beyond the limits of understanding is not accessible to man. Man certainly yearns for the experiences beyond these limits; and he who claims any knowledge of the beyond deludes himself.

"This very craving for the beyond is part of poetry. But this is no transcendental experience. To call it so is simply like becoming inebriated."[25] The ability for objectivity in grasping experience is, naturally, enhanced by training and learning. "An ignorant poet can never equal a learned one, no matter what height he may touch in some specific line. This is because a learned man is more conversant with the historical experience of his race and its culture than an illiterate one or a person with little education."[26] However, learning is not something which only exceptional persons can pursue. Nor does the writing of poetry necessarily require genius. "Now many scientific minds do not consider the ability for poetic creation a miraculous, divine power. They believe that his too is a craft which, through conditioning, proper education, training, concentration and practice an ordinary individual can learn."[27] Lest this stress on deliberation and intellectual clarity should make Sekhon appear to contradict himself and to indulge in a simplification of the literary process, it is necessary that we conclude this review of *Sāhitārath* with a reiteration of the relationship between the intellectual and emotional content in poetry:

> Poetry contains that intellectual content which stirs the readers' or listeners' feelings. If it does not stir the feelings, it is either pseudo-intellectual, that is of low intellectuality, or intellectual in a manner not fit to be the subject of poetry, not needing to be treated in poetry, and one that gains nothing by being treated in poetry.
>
> All poetry is intellectual and emotional. . . . Poetry of many kinds we dub "intellectual" is neither commensurate with sound thinking nor with genuine feelings. In reality

> "pseudo-intellectual" and sentimental poetry are both of the same kind. . . . Sentimentality is that flaw of the feelings which is born of their being without the discipline of intellect.[28]

One last thing which is quite implicit in the above statement of Sekhon's views but which, perhaps, still needs to be mentioned explicitly is the importance of the artist's individuality. In universalizing his experience, the artist does not lose his orginiality; on the contrary, he realizes it fully. Since intellect and emotions are the crucial elements in human experience, its artistic product is most authentic where intellect and emotions are met most directly, that is, in the individual and by the individual. Genuine art, therefore, must have the seal of individual sensibility of the artist. Similarly, art criticism requires sensitivity and a sharp individual sensibility in a critic. Neither artistic creation nor criticism can be completely bound by strict bonds of theory.

Thus Sekhon's criticism, though basically doctrinaire, has an ambivalence which saves it from being crassly propagandistis or imitative. It shows his preoccupation with literature first and politics and ideology after. He reveals the urbanity underlying this attitude even more clearly in the actual application of his critical principles as well as in much of his creative writing. His contribution to Panjabi drama will be considered later but this seems the proper place to mention one of his plays, *Kalākār* (Artist) (1946), as an illustration of his position on the nature of art. In this play he definitely exposes the hypocrisy of the bourgeois art, but beauty still remains for him an essential concern of the artist. This concern is just one instance showing that, for Sekhon, art is too subtle an activity to succumb to simple formulations for its interpretation or creation. The final goal of literature is to serve society. But this is not to be accomplished, it cannot be accomplished, by an easy division between good and bad literature. To understand literature or to produce it, a deep interaction with life as well as literature is necessary. Sekhon's is an involvement of this kind. On the whole, his is not a desire to twist or gloss over literary phenomena to serve a social purpose. In his *Panjābī kāv shromani* (Great Panjabi Poets) (1965), *Bhāī vīr singh dā yug* (The Age of Bhai Vir Singh) and numerous other works, he has tried to place various writers of Panjabi in the context of their time as impartially as possible. For example, a more rigidly dogmatic critic applying Marxian criticism to Guru Nanak's poetry would have a tendency to dub him as a reactionary simply because of the religious nature of his writing. But Sekhon finds in Guru Nanak's poetry a strong reflection of people's interests and greatly admires the form and language in which it is couched. Undoubedtedly, Sekhon's Sikh lineage accounts for his ability to appreciate Guru Nanak's poetry realistically. It is interesting to remember here that among other Western writers influencing Sekhon, T. S. Eliot is also important. T. S. Eliot's stress on the importance of tradition in literary creation has left a definite impression on Seknon:

> Spiritual poetry or art is a historical form of the experience or knowledge, insight and feelings of the human race at different times. In this form the knowledge, insights, and feelings have become part of the nature of different parts of mankind. Their [i.e., different peoples'] tradition,

> history, and other artistic achievement have acquired the spiritual form. . . . In fanatical espousal of realism, to lose this ancestral heritage is not wise either from a historical or a critical point of view.[29]

Here Sekhon sees an agreement between Eliot and Marx. "According to Marxism, on every stage in society, its superstructure is raised on and according to its economic basis. Literature and art are the large part of this superstructure. In this manner, spiritual literature and art are the product of a stage or different stages of society. At different stages, the spiritualism of society has been acquiring different colors."[30] Yet, here again, Sekhon's attitude is no mere borrowed thing. To enable one to see deeply into his tradition, one must possess its legacy in blood. A purely mental connection with it can be of little use. Thus, Sekhon's genuinely Sikh cultural identity, an identity involving commitment to tradition instead of running against the grain of his Marxian thinking, gave depth to it.

But perhaps partly because of the nature of drama as a genre, with its demand for clarity and emphasis in statement, and, partly because Sekhon's chief ambition at first was to be a playwright and, therefore, his commitment to Progressive ideas was projected more zealously here than elsewhere, his plays do not suggest the same depth, maturity and mellowness that are found in his critical writing. The latter appears to be more crucial of the two factors because even when his aims as a writer no longer seem to be primarily concerned with drama, his plays still tend to impart a mentally conceived lesson instead of making the subtle impact he himself expects from art. Except for a few light one-act plays, all of his dramatic writing is seriously didactic. He has written three collections of one-act plays and the following full-length plays: *Kalākār* (1946), *Nārkī* (Denizens of Hell) (1952), *Bhoodān* (Land Gift) (1955), *Vāris* (1955), *Moiāṅ sār nāiṅ kāī* (The Dead Have No Realization) (1958), *Damāyantī* (1960) and *Mittar piārā* (Beloved Friend) (1970). In these writings, besides Marxism, Sekhon is also influenced by G. B. Shaw and Ibsen. Actually, in his early plays, the influence of these playwrights seems greater than that of Marxism. Sekhon finds their social concerns Progressive. In using drama for social purposes, he follows Ibsen, and in technique he is indebted to Shaw's discussion plays. Marxian ideology is there from the beginning but its exposition becomes intense and all-pervasive only gradually. In an essay, "Merā jīvan falsafā" (My Philosophy of Life), Sekhon tells that H. G. Wells and G. B. Shaw were the first influences that made him a Socialist.[31] This happened in his undergraduate days when he had not read Marx. When he did become a confirmed Marxist, the impression of earlier influences persisted. This may be one of the reasons why Sekhon's plays strike one as mainly the vehicles for his ideas and even when, in the light of dialectical materialism, he places his dramatic situations in a historical context, they remain contrived and imaginary. He rarely takes the plots of his plays out of the current reality. They are either futuristic, in the sense that he sets them in a reality that should be and will be, or historical, or, more often, in a combination of the wished-for future and the imagined past.

Sekhon's first notable Progressive plays were "Hartāḷ" (Strike), "Mahātmā" (The Great Soul) and "Bābā bohr" (Grandpa Banyan Tree), all in his first one-act play anthology, "Chē ghar" (Six Houses) published in 1941. "Hartāḷ" expounded the Marxian theory of contradiction between the capitalist and proletarian interests. The play is a series of discussions about the use of strikes by workers as a weapon in the conflict. It aims at edification and does not present the situation concretely enough for impact. One could perhaps say in its defense that the purpose of molding the audience for the creation of a better future cannot be achieved except by pointing to a reality which is only in the offing. But what is coming must be shown in the birth pangs of the present concretely and not simply argued in. The relation between the dying and the evolving in society in "Hartaḷ" is conceived intellectually. It does not acquire the palpable reality of art. The play wins support for the cause of the working class and the idea that women, like Sadhrān the protagonist, need to and can play a vital role in the struggle but this is accomplished mainly by expository writing. The advantages of using the dramatic form are limited to those of catechism and the rudimentary benefits of audio-visual presentation.

"Mahātmā" is a better play for two reasons. First, the episode from Guru Nanak's life in which he shows the inhumanity of exploitation and the joys of honest living by squeezing blood from a handful of food offered him by the rich and powerful Bhāgo and milk from the simple fare given by the poor and hard-working Lālo, is clearly etched in the Panjabi imagination. Secondly, Nānak is presented in a human, rather than divine, aspect and a man in close contact with the rural workers' experience, an experience shared by the common man and by Sekhon himself. All this gives the play a contact with reality and helps in making it artistically convincing.

"Bābā bohṛ" is a fairly successful experiment in poetic drama. The banyan tree is an institution in the rural Panjab. It becomes a very effective symbol and mouthpiece of wisdom and history. The poetic form provides imaginative wings for the thought content which is a postulation of the writer's ideological views, narration of history, and an exhortation to move with it. Sekhon draws on his personal experience, even the physical reality of his own native village, Dākhā, directly:

> The brave guru once stayed here with me
> On his way from Gujrānwālā to Dākhā.[32]
> Again He set out in the morning for a hunt with some brave men.
> An old man led them
> To the old wood of Isowāl and Dākhā.[33]

His analysis of history here is based on the specifics of Sikh history. The opposition between the Progressive and retrogressive forces in history is particularized. The present, growing from the past, points to the future quite spontaneously.

> Smashing down this present order, we should create one new
> Levelling down dead tombs and graves, we'll make an open plain.[34]

As in the early plays, the clue to Sekhon's success or failure in his later plays is in their faithfulness to or departure from his experience.

Sekhon's most talked-about play is *Kalākār* (The Artist) (1946). The framework of its story is patterned after an old Indian myth in which the god Indra seduces rishi Gautam's wife, Ahallya with the help of Chandrama (Moon). As a punishment for her fickleness, Ahallya is petrified by Gautam's curse. When she convinces Gautam of her innocence, he relents and grants that she will regain human form when touched by Rama, the hero of *Rāmāyana*. In *Kalākār*, Inder is a Progressive artist, who, with the help of his sister, Chandrama, persuades Ahallya, the wife of a poet-professor, Gautam, to be his model for a nude painting. Inder's justification for nude art is that the people's artist today, like the ancient artists, those of the Ajanta Caves for example, and unlike the medieval artists who were enslaved and removed from reality by religious or economic control, must portray reality freely. This is the argument by which Ahallya is persuaded to be Inder's model and with which she soothes her disconsolate husband successfully. Nude Ahallya becomes a symbol of reality. The purpose of art, according to Inder, is to give the right direction to life and it can do so only if it itself is derived from the truth of life.

> Inder: Yes, that is what is lacking in this world. Its enlightened men are without action and its men of action without enlightenment. There should be a union of art and action.
>
> Ahallya: You're right. But as art reflects reality, similarly, seeing art, reality keeps changing somewhat. While literature shows life, it also keeps on making new rules and paths for it. In reality, its chief purpose is to show new ways to life, and to achieve that purpose, it must see the present way of life.[35]

The artist craves for beauty. He sees it in reality and tries to preserve and enhance it not only in his art but, through the influence of art, also in life. It is a craving, innocent and peculiar to art, detached from base self-gratification.

> Chandrama: But who knows when art created by transcending lust might change back to lust?
>
> Inder: This is the disastrous aspect of art. When art reverts to lust, it creates disharmony.
>
> Chandrama: Beware, lest your art should become a lust for Ahallya![36]

All good art is truthful, selfless and dedicated to the good of the people.

> Inder: In a Socialist society, the artist will be free to express himself and so far as his self is characterized by feelings of service to all, his art will be valued.[37]

Kalākār is thus an exposition of the Progressive theory of art. It is a very controversial play, the controversy being centered not so much on the validity of the theory as on its application in the play. No one denies the fact that Inder's situation is a close reflection of Sekhon's as a writer. But the question is how far has Sekhon been able to transcend self-interest in his response to experience and create from it a work of art in which reality is seen with detachment and so transmuted that it benefits all instead of satisfying the artist's selfish needs. From one point of view, it can be said that Inder is a realistic portrayal of a bourgeois artist who professes to be Progressive, but fails to be one because of his inability to shed his personal and class interest. His arguments justifying nude art are an excuse, conscious and unconscious, to use Ahallya for selfish ends, professional and personal. Indications of this motive are quite clear in the play. It may, therefore, be argued that Sekhon is aware of the pitfalls besetting a Progressive artist. But it can also be argued, as Attar Singh, himself a basically Marxist critic, has done quite effectively, that the contradiction between selfish and selfless responses to reality is not the object of serious consideration in the play.[38] Inder's self-interest is either not brought into clear focus nor is, apparently, condoned as a foible. The conscious purpose, of the play is to expound the theory of the Progressive Inder's art, but the writer's emotional responses are those of a bourgeois artist. The emotional and the intellectual elements go their own separate ways. Had Sekhon emphatically pointed this contradiction as a serious problem, he would have been faithful to his theory and the play would be a unified work of art. As it is, it seems to be an intellectual excuse for the author's own gratification. Why else, one wonders, would he make a nude woman the symbol of social reality? The parallel between the myth and the story of the play is also confusing. It seems to support the emotional level of meaning, which undermines the unity of the play. The god's seduction of the rishi's wife is hardly a suitable symbol for the intellectual agreement between Inder and Ahallya. Nor does the use of the myth convince as a suitable means of contrast. It seems to be there for its own sake.

The intellectual, propagandistic strain as witnessed in *Kalākār*, dominates most of Sekhon's dramatic writing. It is considerably relieved in *Narkī* by a direct treatment of the dehumanizing effects of capitalism. The play shows the utter lovelessness of life in the house of a black-marketeer whose wife condones all his corruption so long as he brings in money. She also uses sex to have their clerk work for them in their dishonest business. Still one is left with the impression of a contrived situation. The vicious cycle of corruption and inhumanity is described, but does not become quite alive, making the play more incriminating than revealing. The author seems in a hurry to offer political solutions such as the Communistic agitation of the clerks against the businessmen. The play remains an impressionistic statement of the corruption rampant in the capitalistic society. It does not become a vivid picture of it.

In *Bhoodān*, the hypocrisy of the propertied class in using Vinobha Bhave's movement to give the semblance of concern for people gives complexity to their psychology. But it also reduces the dramatic tension because the author's ideological impatience gives the appearance of one good, his idea of "good", being posited against a lesser good, not evil compounded by the semblance of good. The plays *Vāris*, *Moiaṅ sar nāṅ kāi* and *Mittar piārā* are all set outside the scene of Sekhon's direct, personal experience, the first two in Panjab's historical past and the last in Russia. *Vāris* is not about the great Panjabi poet, but the peasant's struggle which, in the context of its time, is Progressive. In *Moiāṅ sār nāṅ kāi* is shown the historical role of British imperialism in sapping the very manhood of the Indian leadership as exemplified in Ranjit Singh's son, Dalip Singh, who has been reduced by his English educators to a shell of a man, and the Sikh Sardars who have become the lackeys of the British. *Mittar piārā* is about the involvement of Lenin with a few Indian, mainly Panjabi, revolutionaries planning their work in Russia. The plays have the advantages of Sekhon's understanding of the historical process and the weaknesses of somewhat purely imagined situations.

In *Damyantī* Sekhon uses the mythical story of Nal and Damyanti in which Nal, a noble king, loses his kingdom and in his poverty, leaves his wife. The loss of the kingdom accrues from his inaptness at gambling. Eventually, he regains both the kingdom and his wife after, he has learned the art. Sekhon uses gambling as a symbol for man's ability, particularly his intellectual competence, to retain the possession of the earth. The story is developed mostly at the mythical level and the allegorized meaning remains ambiguous.

By the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century Panjabi drama had already become strongly reformist in content. *Pragtīvād* intensified the reformist tendencies of the playwrights who had started writing before Sekhon; but these playwrights basically failed to assmilate Sekhon's revolutionary point of view. Their stress remained on individual reform rather than on radical changes in the social setup. They did begin to show their characters taking more drastic steps towards refrom than before. I. C. Nanda's and Gurbakhsh Singh's work was thus affected by *pragtīvād*. The playwright who, at least for some time, consciously adopted class conflict as the basis of his plays is Balwant Gargi, although his understanding of the social dialectic is often very naive and confused. Gargi, like Sekhon, is a prolific writer. Besides nine full-length plays, a half-dozen anthologies of one-act plays, he has produced a considerable amount of fiction and written quite respectable works on Indian and Western drama. But he is pre-eminently a playwright, writing plays with the definite purpose of staging. Of late, he has begun to produce and direct them himself. Perhaps his particular concern for success on the stage has made Gargi sensitive to the current trends in the theater and other arts and he has always tried to be in harmony with them, modifying his views and practice according to changes in the literary and artistic scene. In itself this attitude is not necessarily a weakness. On the contrary, it can keep an artist growing. Much depends on what other factors combine with it.

Progressivism gave clarity of purpose to Gargi's writing. His earliest plays, collected in *Kuārī tīsī* (Virgin Peak) (1944), generally express a strong but vague urge for self-realization and an equally vague perception of an overhanging oppressiveness which at once hinders and challenges the desire for self-fulfillment. Gargi has himself described "Kuārī tīsī" as the revelation of his unconscious mind.[39] Affected by her meeting and talk with a man from the city, Chandi, a hill girl, dares to accompany him towards the mountain peak sacred to the local goddess and tabooed for man. They both perish in a storm. In "Bēbē" (Mommy), the mother loses the love of all her children one by one because of her harsh temper. Her bad temper is, ultimately, the result of her possessive attitude towards her sons, who assert themselves as individuals, although Gargi seems to stress only the consequences, the external form of the underlying conflict, in the quarrels and the tragedy of separation. Similarly, "Bhēd" (Sheep) suggests a rebelliousness in the irony with which the minister, who considers his wife a "dumb sheep" because she conforms to the conventional ceremony of fasting, but himself agrees to join the prayers for the raja's long life, is exposed. Anger and oppression against the unappreciating public are the feelings expressed in "Kalākār" (The Artist). The vague rebelliousness which seems to be Gargi's response to life at the time of writing these plays found a specific direction in Progressivism. It was further clarified by an actual situation, World War II and the famine of Bengal. He began to see the social and economic basis of what man is up against. In "Girjhāṅ" (Vultures), he depicts the cannibalism of the rich. The starving Fajloo is given a hard beating for his inability to dig a grave for a rich man's son. Their baby is wailing at his famished wife's dry breasts. His daughter, begging for food from a sweet seller, is seduced by the latter. Fajloo's anger on learning this destroys his mind. Finding a vultures's feather among corpses in the graveyard, he breaks it and says, "I have killed a vulture," and staggers to death.

Gargi's first full-length play is *Lohā-kut* (Ironsmith) (1944). The ironsmith is the ugly, sweating, muscular and tough Kakoo. He is always busy in his smithy, looking like a demon in the inferno. His wife, Santi, is repelled by him and is attracted to a more personable man, the peasant Gajjan, but making a compromise with social convention, spends twenty years in wedlock. By this time, her daughter grows up, falls in love with a boy of a different caste and elopes with him. The daughter's daring arouses Santi's suppressed desires and she follows her example. Unlike "Girjhāṅ," *Lohā-kut* does not point out the economic factors underlying the tyranny suffered by individuals, but it shows Progressive influence. Published in the same year as "Girjhāṅ", its inception must have been of an earlier date. The cause of suffering in *Lohā-kut* is social convention. Santi has to live with Kakoo because her parents married her to him. She could not be married to Gajjan, who is not of their caste. The answer to the predicament is in the courage to break the inhuman social taboos. Sekhon considers the play Progressive. "According to Sant Singh Sekhon, Baino's daring to elope with the *subedārs'* boy to please herself against the wishes of her parents, and Santi's breaking out of the permanent imprisonment imposed by her parents to go with her lover, are Progressive steps."[40] But it is obvious that Gargi is either not yet familiar with Sekhon's Progressivism based on the theory of the historical conflict of classes, or does not care to follow it in his play. Gargi works through symbols and personal traits of his characters. At the personal level, Kakoo is incapable of understanding Santi's suffering. He is an insensitive individual who needs Santi for physical, emotional, economic and social purposes. Society enables him to use her. Santi, on the other hand, in spite of her disgust with the situation, has a strain of weakness in her character which makes her suppress her spontaneous inclinations and bear with Kakoo as society wants her to. She does so for twenty long years after which the courage and honesty of her daughter fire her emotions afreah and this time she sheds her timidness to follow her deeper inclinations. Though she has put up with an unsatisfactory existence for twenty years, she has never been completely subdued. Kakoo, though unsympathetic, knows her restlessness and intransigence: "Woman's mind is restive. We can beat iron to softness and mold it according to our will, but no one can mold a woman's heart. You never know when and where it may turn. God knows what steel it is made of, the woman's heart."[41] But he realizes this fully only after she leaves him. Earlier he has suspected her of continuing a secret affair with Gajjan and tried to keep her in line by terror. He uses the same weapon on his daughter, but without success. He attributes the failure to Santi's liberality:

> Women need to be kept in shape with a chisel. If you had not given her freedom, she would not have run away. A thing like this had never happened in this house before. Women always stayed at the hearth and men at the smithy. Had I known she would turn out to be such a whore, I would have strangled her to death at birth.[42]

In answer, Santī throws the failure of his coercive acts in his face and considers his debacle to be the result of his own behavior.

> You kept her by force of fear, bound in ropes and terrified. She couldn't bear this cruelty and rebelled. She challenged you and shattered your pride. You could never forgive her transgression. Now you are taking it out on me. But I'll never let you fulfill this desire. Beware! Don't you raise your hand on me.[43]

The power of Kakoo's tyranny has now vanished for Santī as it has for Baino. In this manner *Lohā-kut* is based on a conflict of temperaments. But the deeper conflict is of a different kind. It is the conflict between society as a whole and the human desire to live spontaneously. The first conflict merges with the second, the characters on opposite sides in the first being swayed in different ways by the second, and, at crucial moments, dividing themselves as agents of the opposing forces. Thus Kakoo, except for his somewhat ambivalent position at the end, is throughout representative of society and his daughter that of human freedom and integrity. Kakoo states: "These ways of yours will some day destroy us. Now in my last days, you have nothing to do but dishonor my beard. What else?"[44] Santi describes the opposition thus: "You rankle in all people's eyes. You are not only a daughter of this house, but of the whole village. If you dishonor the village, nobody is going to forgive you."[45] To which Baino's answer is, "The village honor is lost everyday, at every instant. It is supported by mere show, a lie, this honor. A passion flows in the heart of every woman here, and consummed in its fire, she is burnt to ashes. You too."[46] In this antagonism, Kakoo, as a representative of social conformity, develops into being the very epitome of its power, callousness and impersonality. Gargi exploits the atmosphere and the hardness of the blacksmith's tools to suggest this monstrous development. As Santi observes, "The dust flying from hot iron has thoroughly penetrated your body. Beating iron day and night, you yourself have become iron . . . cold, callous, insensitive."[47] By such dramatic effects, Gargi aims to stir his audience against the oppressiveness of social norms.

He certainly succeeds in arousing favorable feelings for Baino. Even Santi wins sympathy in spite of one's initial reluctance to accept her action because the bold action of this middle-aged woman is at first more shocking than admirable. But the shock value should be considered a merit, not a weakness, of the play. After the shock is over, it gives stability to the rebelliousness engendered by the play. So far so good. But the trouble begins when we try to pinpoint the object of anger. Many critics have accused Gargi for having misdirected the noble feelings aroused by *Lohā-kut*. The play, they feel, berates the ugliness of the blacksmiths' occupation and is an adverse commentary on the life-style of their caste. Or, it sees the source of evil in individual temperament. In either case the social purpose of the play is not realized.[48] The rationale for the play undoubtedly lies in social concern.

Neither of the above charges can be fully denied. In fairness, it may be pointed out that the ugliness of the blacksmith's trade and Kakoo's character are determined by their situation in society. After all, the play is the tragedy of Kakoo's life. It is not a case of poetic justice. Circumstances have so molded him that he goes against his own, essentially human, interests. If the play fails to yield this impression, it is perhaps due to the reader's or the director's inability to study or present it properly. Yet the charges cannot be dismissed. They stem from a problem which is very real in *Lohā-kut* and in much of Gargi's other dramatic writing. It is connected with the manner in which he analyzes and presents his experience. If an artist is devoted to the cause of social well-being or improvement, he will have to agree, as Sekhon does, that a clear understanding of the situation he presents in his art, is a pre-requisite for his work. It is not enough for art with a social purpose to be motivated only by responses almost purely emotional. In *Lohā-kut*, even if one sees that ultimately society is responsible for coercion of the individual, there is no indication why or by what tangible means it gets its hold on the individual and by what clear steps can man make it more congenial for his purposes. Neither the social process nor the paths of rebellion against it become clear. Gargi shows only the apparent conflict between the individual and his social environment and does not provide an understanding of its fundamental bases. Borrowing an analogy from his craft, he remains like a man who may catch hold of the thief's mask, but misses the thief.

Emotionally he generally does better in this play than Sekhon. He goes directly to his experience and responds spontaneously to the good and evil that he meets. Reflected in his plays, this same ability to separate right from wrong inclines his audience in the right direction. The segment of his experience that he portrays is taken out of social reality. It includes contradictions which are ultimately the result of the most central processes in the total social reality. If class conflict is basic to this process, it is not necessary that it would not lead to contradictions within one class.

Actually, such contradictions are likely to be its one lethal effect on the humanity of individuals in an exploited class. Such processes within a segment of the social reality and their connection with the totality of the social process are experienced emotionally in *Lohā-kut* but for want of a clear mental perception, the social benefits of this experience are not fully realized and are even liable to become dangerous.

Gargi's use of his experience has another characteristic, which, though useful to some extent, begins to negate his social purpose when indulged in to an excess. This is his practice of creating dramatic effects by using symbols, as Kakoo becomes a symbol of social coercion, or there are other symbolistic suggestions in words, things and events, such as the young female cow kicking back parallels the character of Baino. Such imaginative abstraction of experience is very helpful in creating the desired dramatic effect, but when used too deliberately, it becomes removed from experience. Instead of being organically imaginative, it becomes a mannerism and a technical trick consciously devised. It may still have its dramatic effect, but it will not be an effect related to the artist's experience of life. If the artist is already not giving intellectual insight into social experience, the withdrawal from emotional experience combining with this deficiency can make the work of art completely devoid of social content. This is not what always happens in Gargi, but the danger is always there. It makes him impose patterns on experience instead of letting them emerge from it. Nothing is more symptomatic of the tendency in Gargi than his use of language in the titles of his works or in his purple passages. Like his total experience, his language too is rich in country idiom. But he is quite prone to picking expressions from common, deep country speech and to looking for occassions to use them, quite often in a context different from the native. This, in spite of his being about the best prose writer in Panjabi. His love of purely rural vocabularly, often without reference to content, is a fascination in itself. He romanticizes his use of words. He has a similar tendency to retain symbols which were once born of experience. The image of the village hermit sitting at his holy fire is an obsession with Gargi. Sometimes he has used it effectively, but many times he brings it in forcibly. Whereas indifference to intellectual exploration of his social experience has the effect of making his Progressive suggestions vague and apparently calling for individual instead of social action, his propensity towards symbolism can make his plays confrontations between stereotypes, which may be successful due to the technical handling of the confrontation, but which have no relation to social reality. Fortunately, this is not the case in *Lohā-kut*.

Similar to the imaginative simplification caused by an excessively conscious use of symbols and types, there can also be an easy intellectual simplification. Apparently, the relationships in the social process may be explored and noticed but actually, they are assumed for borrowed. This also leads to the evolution of stereotypes. There is a hint of such simplification in "Girjhañ," though it is compensated for by Gargi's awareness of the role of money and class conflict. Imaginatively too, the situation in "Girjhañ" is conceived in exaggerated terms. Though the circumstances warrant it, the play did not need the melodrama of Fajloo being beaten. Still, the play is effective because of its fine ending showing with intellectual and imaginative realism the helplessness and pathos of Fajloo's situation.

Nawāṅ mudh (New Beginning) (1949) displays a very significant insight into the nature of man, the social animal. After his only child's marriage, Khema, a widower, decides not to have new involvements. But when close to death he hears the sound of the drum at the wedding of his daughter's girlfriend, he craves to be part of it all. In *Visvedār* (Landlord) (1948), Gargi directly treated the conflict between the working and the privileged classes. It is a play about an actual peasant movement, the tenants rising against their landlords in an area of the Panjab. The play dramatizes the evil characters and deeds of a landlord and his accountant, but shows the ultimate triumph of the peasants.

In *Sail patthar* (Cold Stone) (1945), Gargi shows a clear commitment to the Progressive credo. The credo is stated in the play by Suvira, who wants a sculptor, Jaidev, to adopt it to make his art truly meaningful. By the end of the play Jaidev has become a Progressive sculptor. Thus the play is similar in theme to Sekhon's *Kalākār*. As a matter of fact, Gargi tells us that the original title of his play was the same as Sekhon's, but when he learned that Sekhon was also using the same title for a play, the present title was used.[49] Gargi's play is not as complex as Sekhon's *Kalākār*. It does not deal with the interrelationships of art, society and history. Nor is it an elaborate piece. It makes the simple pronouncement that art should serve people, but does not explain the process which gives art its social function. In the preface to the play, Gargi says:

> The name of the artist I do not remember, but this much I do remember that the model for his beautiful paintings was that servant of his who used to mix colors for him in the mortar.
>
> Such an artist has a film of romance stretched over his eyes. He looks for beauty in ugliness -- beauty that is rotting. This point of view is devoid of realism. The other point of view is one of reality and optimism. This viewpoint does not keep on stitching the tattered and filthy bourgeois quilt with a beautiful, silken thread, nor does he beautify the old values with a diseased imagination. Destroying this torn, tattered quilt completely, he tries to sew new quilts so that the body of society may protect itself from cold. This point of view calls for the return of the blood squeezed from the poor workers, the fertility of the arid land, mother's breasts for the weaned children, and food for the babies fallen from the nest. Suvira, who thinks this way, is bitterly critical of the cold touch of Jaidev's statues. Jaidev's art is measured in the scales of buying and selling. His statues are the white, cold storages of marble where the corpse of our bourgeois society lies. Jaidev tries to save this corpse from putrefaction. He is the guardian of this cold storage. He culls beauty out of ugliness, claims to wrest light out of darkness; like a mill-owner, he contracts to mint silver coins from the sweat of the laborers. This sculptor belongs to that class of artists who consider a model to be like the nut or cog of a machine which goes round in their art factories like an axle or a belt.[50]

Suvira delivers similar speeches pointing out the callousness of art meant purely for the entertainment of the rich, who seem to admire only its formal aspects or stark surface realism. In the bourgeois circles, the simple act of capturing an experience in an artistic medium is considered to create beauty. The experience need not be interpreted, understood or responded to emotionally. It is simply to be preserved, watched and admired. If a work of art is based on an ugly object, its beauty, is all the more remarkable. With this in mind, Jaidev carves the statue of the poor, ugly girl whom he pays to starve so that he can portray hunger and ugliness together. Survira, professing Marxist views, tells him plainly what she thinks of his art:

> Your art thrives on hunger. The critics of this art are the big-bellied businessmen who are thrilled to see the ugly beauty of this hungry girl, her dreadful, gaping eyes, listless arms, and the emaciated stomach; and they reward you. Eating *rasgullas* and pastries at a tea party, they say, "How beautiful is this girl's face! How beautiful the lips chapped by hunger! How taut are the veins etched on her neck!" Your art is not for the people, not for the uprooted and homeless, not to help the inhabitants of the sweeper's colony, but for the . . . rich who do not give up eating to see this hunger but doubly suck the people's blood. Their praise is meaningless, an ostentation, a show, a lie. To make Roopa sit here for hours by paying money is a slur on the artist's imagination and his insight into reality. Your model and art are related through money not an all embracing understanding and a high awareness.[51]

Sail patthar marks an advance in Gargi's insight into society and art. He sees the role of money in social classification and determining human relations within a class and across class boundaries. He does not set up any monstrous stereotypes to present these relations, as writers depicting class conflict are often tempted to. Along with deeper understanding, Gargi's sympathy for the underdog has become a clearly social concern. The central theme of the play, the function of art, reflects Gargi's serious concern with his own motives as an artist He is very incisive in seeing the psychology behind the motto "Art for art's sake." It is the best way of inuring oneself to the ugliness and pain of life. All this is a gain in Gargi's career as a writer. But somehow the play is wanting in impact. Looking for the causes of this weakness, one finds that though Gargi gets some new ideas, these are not fully explored. Instead, they are reiterated over and over again. Gargi tries to achieve his purpose by rhetoric instead of revealing deeper undercurrents of the reality he has already shown. The picture he gives seems accurate enough for what it shows, but it is not fully elaborated. Particularly lacking is the inside view of the "people's" life which the artist must depict and improve. This is disappointing because the very purpose of the play is to show its importance. The play shows the failure of the bourgeois artist but the mention of his final success, his transormation into a people's artist, seems make-believe. Gargi had shown his real involvement with the oppressed before. But now, as his vision of the source of evil becomes clearer, that of the downtrodden segment of society appears to shrink. Whereas Kakoo, the blacksmith becoming iron in the midst of iron was not clearly seen as the product of the social-economic system, the sculptor who becomes a stone among stones is much better understood as part of the system: "You have not awakened the statues but have made them still. Carving stones, you have yourself changed to stone."[52] But Roopa is hardly human. She is a symbol, an ugly girl representing the ugly life of the poor as Kakoo represented the evil of society. What is this new limitation, apparently a complete reversal of the earlier vision, due to? Is it because Gargi is beginning to enter the very condition his artist in *Sail patthar* has just left behind? After all, Jaidev's transformation also seems forced. If he should not be moved by the suffering of a living girl, how could he be touched by her death? Gargi's symbols are beginning to take their toll.

The symbolistic element in Gargi's play kept on increasing. Here and there he still continues to present reality directly. One-act plays -- "Daswandh" (Tithes), "Moghā" (Water Exit) in the volume, *Daswandh* (1949), and "Suādalī gall" (An Interesting Affair) in *Do passē* (Two Sides) (1949) deal with socio-economic problems realistically. "Daswandh" is an expose of a corrupt government official whose duty is to eradicate bribery, but who himself forces people to bribe him. "Moghā" presents the peasants conflict with irrigation officials over the opening of an irrigation water exit. The officials give up when the peasant women also come out to fight. "Suādalī gall" reveals the emptiness of the upper middle-class existence. But his next full-length play, *Ghuggī* (Dove) (1950), written in support of the peace movement, is built almost entirely around symbols. The central symbol is the dove, representing peace and people. Marking the triumph of the peace party, Mana sews this symbol on her martyr husband's shirt as she tells the *zaildār* (revenue official), a supporter of the war party, to get out of her house, then tells the child, Pali, that the symbol is the very embodiment of the workers' labor. Story and characterization are subordinated to the symbolic pattern of the play. Gargi experiments here with the folk dramatic technique, the audience participating in the action of the play. Folk drama, by simplification and abstraction, of life has the power to sway the audience, but its use must be made with great caution because, whereas in the drama of folk origin, the values dramatized have been tested and screened over a long period and only the desirable ones endure. In using folk techniques on the modern stage for contemporary subjects, one may be propagating values not quite valid. *Ghuggī*, motivated by very admirable concern for world peace, is still an attempt to win the audience by imposing a pre-conceived view of reality than to reveal it for the audience.

In *Kesro* (1952), Gargi goes back to his experience of the rural life and captures it directly. *Kesro* is similar to *Lohā-kut* in showing the opposition between the individual and society, but it is more realistic than *Lohā-kut*. Though characters opposed to Kesro, who has undertaken to educate herself and become economically independent, do represent social pressure against her, the pressure does not acquire the strong symbolic form as it did in Kakoo. Nor does it remain purely individual as is often the case in *Lohā-kut*. Kesro is a fine blend of individual and Socialist Realism. It brings out the economic basis of social development in a simple yet convincing manner. Intellectual enlightenment and economic independence are keys to human progress as they are to Kesro's fulfillment. Gargi here succeeds in showing the future convincingly emerging from the present.

But unfortunately, he has now become too absorbed in technical virtuosity to approach life directly in this manner. He tries to impose a dramatic pattern on his situations, keeping the situation from unfolding itself. Even when he professes concern for the state of society, he does not achieve contact with it. For instance, *Kanak dī ballī* (An Ear of Wheat) (1954) is a romantic tragedy acted out by a set of stereotype characters with only a remote connection with the current social reality. After this play, Gargi seems to have given up even the professions of being a Progressive playwright. Let us now turn to *pragatīvād* in short stories.

In a short sketch of Sekhon, Gargi says, "When he writes a story, his description of village life, atmosphere and action are very interesting, but, here and there, he sticks onto his stories a social or Marxist label as the seal of his intellectuality. Sometimes he hangs ideology life a signboard on the face of his story."[53] A reader of Sekhon's fiction will readily agree with Gargi in the first part of his comment, but, excepting very few stories, it would be difficult to find agreement for the second. For what makes Sekhon's stories interesting is the authenticity of his experience and his ability to capture it directly and with accuracy. The intellectual and ideological elements in his stories are not forced, but an integral, part of the experience in them, its implicit or explicit logic. Unlike Gargi, whose chief mode of abstaction is imagination and who, through this abstraction not only in his plays, but also in his fiction is liable to become removed from his experience, Sekhon -- whose interpretation of life is predominantly intellectual and, in his plays, often at variance with his instinctive response to life -- in his short stories shows a unity between the intellectual and other aspects of his experience. It can be said that here his experience finds its logic, and logical understanding expands and intensifies experience. Sekhon's ideological conclusions follow so naturally from his total experience that, quite frequently, he simply puts segments of it in his short stories, without feeling the need to include any explicit interpretation, obsessessed as he is with exposition. There are even quite a few stories where it is hard to find the remotest connection with social concern unless love of life and mankind be considered a basic social concern, as it well may be. It has been quite aptly remarked about Sekhon's short stories, "All the stories . . . do not present dogmatic Communist ideology."[54] In an essay, Sekhon himself comments on the nature of the short story:

> The modern story is a piece of life, containing an independent idea in which no effort is made to present any set notions of religion or morality, but in it is expressed the beauty, the delicacy and importance of an ordinary incident of life . . . as one is called upon to look at a beautiful flower or the smile of a beautiful woman . . . or the "meaningful" talk of a child.[55]

Some of Sekhon's most impressīve storīes are completely free of didacticism. These include such stories as "Pemī dē nīaṇe (Pemi's Children), which tenderly portrays the psychology of children who, afraid of being kidnapped while crossing a deserted road, find their own innocent answer to their predicament. "Bābā Jaimal" is an indulgent though realistic treatment of an old man who does not scruple over fine moral details; "Hal-wāh" (The Tiller) is about a young man who, when the girl he loves tries to wake him up in the early hours, feigns to be asleep because he is afraid it is his uncle waking him to go to plough the fields.

The freedom to range in Sekhon's world, without having to force meaning out of it because the world itself overflows with meaning, yields, besides variety in subject, some other features peculiar to his short stories. The most noticeable among these is the relative looseness of plot. Plot is often nonexistent in his stories. Again and again this is cited as an adverse feature but, actually, it is associated with the strength of his writing. His stories verge on being essays -- thoughts, narrative and description all in one. They are not unrelated elements, but are unified by the inner logic of the experience reflected in them. They appear to be thrown together easily because the work of unifying them has already been completed in the author's mind, conscious and unconscious. So the author does not have to devise. He simply pours out his experience and it follows its own pattern, its own rise and fall and climaxes. It is almost literally a case of reality becoming art.

In characterization again, though, there are mainly two broad categories as would be expected from an ideology-ridden writer; the division is natural not forced. There is honesty in seeing good and evil in individuals and groups. Notions of heroism and villainy are not imposed but generally follow from the depiction of reality. Of course, because of a confirmed point of view, there are a few stereotypes, like the moneylender, but considering the point of view, it is amazing how few there are. On the whole, there are more good people in Sekhon's world than bad, the reason for this being that he is mainly concerned with the suffering and the disadvantaged, showing that the factors that keep them down are preserved more by institutions than humans. Being underprivileged, the good people cannot attain to great heroic dimensions and may sometimes even appear to be not sufficiently good or even the reverse of it; the result is that the writer has to plead for them as in "Eh Nidosā Mariai" (The Death of an Innocent) where the old peasant Inder Singh's sons hold him responsible for his failure in life. But when Inder Singh explains the difference between himself and his own father, the superiority of his character is revealed. "In order to be justified before a rational son, he had to abandon his ancestors, though only for a moment, and perhaps he had never seen the failure of his life with this clarity as now when he had cast a backward glance at its history and had expressed it in words."[56]

Sekhon has written four collections of short stories, *Samācār* (Circumstances) (1943) *Kamē tē yodhē* (Workers and Warriors) (1950), *Adhī vāt* (Midway) (1954), and *Tījā pehr* (The Third Phase) (1958). The bulk of his stories is about village life, mainly that of the Sikh peasants. He shows the harshness of the peasant's life, his struggle for existence in the face of nature and socio-economic exploitation. What draws one's attention most in this scene of suffering is the integrity, nobility and the worth of the peasant character. As the title of Sekhon's second book of short stories indicates, his peasants are not dejected and completely crushed people with no initiative. They have always struggled valiantly to survive, and to survive with dignity. On occassion they have even fought for their own rights or for other righteous causes. It is true that upto the present time, they have held superstitious beliefs which have kept them down. But these superstitions are often connected with their inner goodness and integrity. "Inder Singh considered the deity as partial to the moneylender. What he feared was that the result of the moneylender's estrangement might be the deity's indignation at his family."[57] Moreover, they are becoming aware of the real state of affairs and beginning to take steps that will bring them to their own. Their attitude, if not in theory, at least in practice, is a complete contrast to the escapist one of Sham Lal Vedanti:

> Human endeavor, so far as he knew from experience, he considered a very insignificant power. It is only providence that can make a great difference between man and man; this was his belief. And if man fails to understand something beyond this, there is always the theory of *karma* to unravel all mysteries. Sham Lal was poor and miserable, not so much because the bad actions of his past life were giving him trouble, as due to his worldly incompetence to manage affairs in this life. Competence was a thing beyond his understanding. The high edifice of his philosophy was built on the foundation of providence.[58] ("Shām Lāl Vēdāntī")

It is true that the peasants have not remained untouched by other-worldly beliefs, but their work has kept them down to earth even in contradiction to their professed dependence on providence. They may not be fully aware of this quality in their temperament, but it is certainly reflected in their actions. In "Antam vidaigī" (The Last Farewell) the sick Daya Kaur's fight against death is her own personal struggle against sickness, though she transfers the credit to the gods: "Knowing full well the injustice of gods, she would never call it so, would not even let a thought of this injustice enter her mind."[59] Hers is no passive acceptance, just positive thinking. Sekhon describes the situation quite accurately, though perhaps unconsciously: "The presure of the enemy against the soul's fortress increased so much that after four months of brave fighting the soul had to leave the fortress."[60] The activistic strain of Daya Kaur's temperament is paralleled by the insight of Bijai Singh ("Ik yodhē dā calāṇā"; The Death of a Warrior) and Inder Singh ("Ehu nidosā māriai"), which guides him to send his son to school. The forces of darkness still prevail, but the peasant is gaining an awareness of the socio-economic process and beginning to strive for his rights. "Patāl dā bandā" (The Man from the Nether World) describes the new ferment, despite the older generation's misgivings. "Nimk harām" (Untrue to Salt) shatters the myth of peasants being supported by the businessmen. "Ās dā janam" (The Birth of Hope) is crassly propagandistic, but the outline of a future projected in it is not quite unrelated to the peasants' character and the awareness that is already stirring among them:

> The terrible power which had for hundreds of generations gripped them as *kismet*, which had sucked both their blood and marrow completely, will become helpless before Socialism. The money-lender's debts, the landlord's share in the crop, the bone-crushing government tax, which, unlike the money-lender's loan installments, could not be postponed, from which they could not filch anything as they could in crop-sharing, will have to be paid no more. . . . Now no one will be so rich that he can get a beautiful bride and a handsome dowry, in young age or old, whenever he desires.[61]

The cycle of exploitation that the peasant is caught in is very vicious. With great difficulty Ramzan, in "Lekhai chod alēkhai chūtēh" (Salvation from Debt), has prevailed upon his creditor to write off his loan in exchange for a very good buffalo and a gold ornament of his wife's which she had managed to procure after great sacrifices. The moneylender's kind-hearted son, who had used his influence to disentangle Ramzan from his father's net, advises him, "Now don't borrow any money on Jalal's wedding!" "What else shall I do, Master? was Ramzan's answer."[62] At times the situation seems desperate. Sekhon bursts out in anger:

> A million curses on this poverty which deprives man even of his generous nature. What is its cure? To make the world rich gradually by the capitalist method or to produce a little more wealth for everyone by joint national or group efforts? Were Communism or Socialism among remedies? Or just despair! Why don't the poor turn into thugs, thiefs and robbers? Why do they let the world which sucks their blood sleep in comfort? Why shouldn't they either conquer it or die? But then, poverty does not leave in man even this kind of desperate fearlessness."[63]

But the leaven of change and progress seems to be acting quickly. It has found a congenial element. For example, the effect of new ideas brought into a village by an American political worker is electric in "Patāl dā bandā" (The Man from the Nether World): "Very soon our village began to hum like a beehive and we began to feel life in ourselves, as if we could topple thrones and overturn mountains."[64]

Sekhon also treats the life of the working class that helps the peasant in his work. Their economic condition is even worse than that of the peasants who hire them. But it is not a relation between the rich and the poor, but between two poor classes. It is riddled with conflicts of interest and mutual economic dependence. "Kirsān tē kāmā" (Peasant and the Hired Hand) brings out the harsh economic reality and pathos of this relation. In "Ujāṛā" (Uprooting) the whole sweepers' quarter in the village is found empty one morning because, unable to pay their accumulated debts, they have all left the village. The whole village misses them and their services sorely. But neither party can do without the other. Having accummulated debts at other places, the sweepers return the next year.

One class of people Sekhon will not have around are men of religion. The only religion he accepts is the service of mankind. Fortunately, the holy men themselves are realizing their redundancy as in "Prohit" (Priest). Ironically, the more honest among them, like the blind Maghar in "Jag tē jiuṇā kūṛ unhāṅ dā" (Superfluity of Their Life on Earth) admit their hypocrisy. Besides keeping man in the dark about the significance of human life, even today, religion can unleash bestial violence. Perhaps the most powerful story written by Sekhon is "Bhūtāṅ di khēd" (The Sport of Goblins). It is about the 1947 massacres done in the name of religion. The story is simply stunning in effect. Sparing the slightest comment, Sekhon presents the action in such unsentimental language that its detachment in creating the scene and narrating the story hurts like a knife.

When Sekhon steps out of the rural world to treat a wider scene in his stories, his stress on the economic factors in life is even greater than in the rural stories. Economic relations are more important, at times the only, link in the wider social context. The effects of the modern, money economy are more intense in the urban as compared to rural life. Sekhon's experience of urban life is not as comprehensive and deep as that of the rural. All these factors combine to make the economic basis of society instead of the total social structure a more frequent theme in these stories. In "Kitāṅ andar kit" (Insect Within an Insect), we see the economics of a dog-eat-dog world. The pity of it is that some real "human beings" are caught in this cycle. They must eat the smaller insects or perish. There are also those in the chain who are only eaten and have no one below them to swallow, not that they are the kind of creatures who would want to do so. Such is the peon in "Tarrakī" (Promotion), who has to part with half his salary to his boss, in addition to working without compensation at the latter's house. The deduction from the salary is his monthly "board fee." But he must eat at the boss's house. The range of Sekhon's stories dealing with the economic reality is wide. Some are concerned with individual problems, though these may be typical of the general situation, as "Tarrakī" or "Pachtāvā" (Repentance), where the romance and happiness of a couple who marry in great love are undermined by financial stringency, others deal with the economic framework of the entire society or large segments of it. The second kind also deals with politics and other aspects of society.

Political agitation is necessary for social improvement. Sekhon also insists on the participation of women in politics for their own uplift and to ensure the improvement of the entire society, as he states in "Varolā" (Cyclone): "It is very important that women join the national and revolutionary movements. That creates two attractions for man, the pursuit of national salvation and woman's beauty. In European countries, it is because of women that revolutionary movements are never completely suppressed."[65] Again in "Formulē" (Formulas): ". . . in our country, revolutionary work is not only a rebellion against government and the capitalist, it is also a rebellion against nature. Only a rare youngman can take the vow to remain celibate for life to do revolutionary work."[66]

For Sekhon sexual satisfaction is essential for human happiness. So in his stories he makes and advocates an open mention of the human sexual need and sexual behavior. Evasion of sex in literature is a symptom and cause of human suppression. It is obviously a suppression of a basic desire of man. But, further, its evasion in literature reflects suppression of truth and reality in general. Without contact with truth and reality, society cannot be revolutionized. Without revolution, man cannot be happy. Superficial change to hide its blemishes will not do.

Besides Sekhon, the short story writer most well-known for Progressivism is Sujan Singh. His books of short stories are *Dukh-sukh* (Pain and Peace) (1941), *Dukh-sukh toṅ pichoṅ* (After Pain and Peace) (1946), *Sabh raṅg* (All Colors) (1952), *Narkaṅ dē dēvtē* (Gods in Hell) (1954), *Nawaṅ raṅg* (New Color) (1955), *Manukh tē pashū* (Men and Beasts) (1958), and *Sawāl jawāb* (Questions and Answers) (1962). His growth as a writer has been described by a critic as follows:

> The evolution of the art of Sujan Singh's short story can be seen in three phases. The first phase when hardships and suffering had gripped him and in response to them, he had developed a vague insight. . . . The second phase came as a result of the intensification of hardships. The more oppressed he was by hardships, the more his insight grew, though it did not yet become quite clear. Some stories of this phase are found in *Dukh-sukh toṅ pichoṅ*. The third phase began when Sujan Singh, melted so much in the crucible of suffering with the fire of economic want, that he shone like gold and his vision, acquiring considerable clarity, became impressive. The goal he had earlier perceived vaguely, appeared before him in clear, white light. This phase can be seen in the new stories of *Sabh raṅg*, some stories of *Narkaṅ dē dēvtē* and most stories in *Manukh tē pashū* and *Nawāṅ raṅg*. Here one notices that, going beyond reformism, Sujan Singh has arrived near the stage of *pragtīvād*. . . . In the characters of the reformist Sujan Singh, there did arise the desire for reform but they lacked courage and, therefore, became weak and helpless before the barrier of old values and did not dare to cross the conventional lines."[67]

Sujan Singh himself points out his aims as an artist in the prefaces to some of his books. In the preface to his last book, *Sāwāl jawāb* he says:

> Time has changed; rulers have changed, society has changed. What an intelligent person knows is a faithful summation of the feelings and ideas derived from man's experience from the earliest times, that is his confrontation with nature and human society, and of the conclusions derived from these feelings and ideas. It is true that, instead of an even look at life, looking at it from a biased view, the knowledge and form of reality become distorted like the distorted images in a curved mirror. What man knows and feels from his present experience is affected by the knowledge accumulated by mankind previously and similarly, the present knowledge also affects the previously gathered knowledge -- filling gaps, correcting mistakes, giving new directions in the interest of truth, and, in this manner, also laying the foundations of the future. Changing knowledge is a reflection of the changing life. To present this knowledge with the associated changing feelings by maintaining the illusion of reality -- that is by combining characters, actions, etc. -- through the art of words in an apparently complete but actually incomplete context, is the function of an enlightened fiction writer.[68]

In practice, the function of art can be simply summed up in this manner: "The works which contain, no matter in what form, regret for the lost good, the frustration caused by the current deprivations, the hopes of a beautiful future, bitter criticism of evil, are successful. The function of the critic is to see how far this has been achieved in my works."[69] In addition to seeing the historical nature of art, Sujan Singh is also aware that to be the proper subject of art, the experience of life at a particular point in history must be individual. The writer bases his stories on real events: "The story writer seeks issues and ideas in the incidents of life. He does create events and characters after thinking out issues."[70]

In the story "Mahākavī," (The Great Poet) the protagonist realizes his mistake: "Balwant, the poet, had thought that he could know everything without seeing, could feel everything without actual personal perception. He had deluded himself that he could depict reality by substituting imagination for experience. His poetry had been founded on mist and smoke."[71]

Sujan Singh also considers the suitability of the short story as a vehicle for modern perception experience. Like the epic, novel and drama, the short story is capable of making a great impact on the "people":

> In it, condensed thoughts are presented in an easy form. Lyrical and philosophical poetry, because of its brevity, suggestiveness, high imagination, subtlety, etc. and philosophical works of prose because of their dry reasoning are often not understood by the common people. But in a story, characters, their actions, dialogue, realistic imagination, etc. give ideas the form of a light, digestible, pabulum for the common man.[72]

No wonder, then, that, as a writer, Sujan Singh has confined himself to short story writing. His best stories are those which have originated in an incident actually experienced by him. Starting as a petty clerk, and later becoming a school teacher, he passed through years of indigence during which time he managed to acquire the needed qualifications to become a college teacher. Except for the last volume of his stories, all his writing was done before he started to teach in college. So his stories are derived from his personal experience of economic want and the accompanying problems. He tells us that in the book of life he has read of only pain.[73] In this general picture, the suffering he has experienced most closely is that of the school teachers and clerks. The suffering of the manual worker, in the factory and on the fields, becomes his concern as an extension of his own experience. Among the workers, his contact with the urban working class is closer than that with the farm worker. So, when he becomes keenly aware of the pain of economic want and treats it in his fiction, he achieves the greatest intensity in stories about the life of teachers and clerks, next to that in those about the urban poor, and the least in those set in the country:

> When he describes the life of the poor and deprived teachers, his writing acquires extremely powerful effects, because he himself is leading a similar existence. When he depicts the miserable plight of the teachers, it seems that his pen is using his own "red red" blood instead of blue ink. Here the force of his writing seems to be at its peak . . . In "Rajāī" (The Quilt) he creates forceful and effective irony. Though people call the teachers "nation builders," the "makers" are being transformed by those "to be made." "Garm kot" (Warm Jacket) and "Rajai" are two successful stories about the life of teachers.[74]

In these stories, while Sujan Singh points out the social injustice responsible for the teachers' plight and indicates the need for redress, his primary accomplishment is the portrayal of a particular situation. The rest, the social insight and the moral import, follows from it and does not need to be stressed or elaborated. The purpose has been achieved mainly by the action and characters in the story.

When Sujan Singh widens the scope of his fiction to encompass the life of the entire working class and, to some extent, that of their exploiters, two thing happen. First, he has to make considerable use of vicariously perceived reality to enter the life of his characters. Secondly, the social canvas in his stories broadens, and as a result, he needs to show the relationships among characters in the wide complex of society. Both these factors can be, and often are, a source of great enrichment in Sujan Singh's writing. They widen and deepen his reality. It gains in universality and social meaning. It begins to give a better understanding of society and is imbued with sympathy for the bulk of its population. So literature serves the wider interests of society and mankind. It becomes Progressive.

Sujan Singh has written quite a few stories which are characterized by these qualities, that is, a wide, yet strong, sympathy with the exploited in society and a sharp, realistic probing into the socio-economic reality, exposing its inhumanity. The vicariousness of experience is no insurmountable disadvantage. For one thing, Sujan Singh's experience of the worker's life is only partially vicarious. Secondly, his intense humanity easily enables him to bridge whateven gap there is. So he has been able to write many moving stories giving a forceful, human direction to life. "Manukh tē pashū" reveals the bestiality of a corrupt political and religious leader and the system that keeps such animals in power. To eliminate opposition from an honest political worker, he runs him over with his jeep and gets away with it. In "Do rastē" (Two Ways) the two segments of society, the exploiting and the exploited are effectively juxtaposed in the characters of two brothers, one having chosen to be the "big fish" and the other choosing to help the "small fry" with all the risks that go with it. "Siṭṭā" (Result) is about the integrity and awakening of Atma Singh who cannot be persuaded by the rich moneylender and the landlord that it is a sin to deny that poverty and wealth are determined by the will of God. "Kapūr tē mazdū" (Kapoor and the Laborer) exposes the machinations of the mill owners to create division among the workers to keep them suppressed. In "Cor tē sādh" (The Thief and the Holy Man) the real thief is the swami who lives a lavish and lustful life because he knows how to live with the rich in the name of religion and in cruel contrast, the poor starving man, consumed with labor, hunger and the opium he had become addicted to with the purpose of pushing himself at work, now compelled to petty pilfering, is obviously the truly pious man. "Dost" (Friend) is a fairly convincing picture of middle-class aspirations and how the successful individuals in the class try to dissociate themselves from the working class or their own poor relations.

A very large number of Sujan Singh's stories are about the exploitation of woman and the need for recognizing that without giving her her due place, a society cannot be healthy. "Rabb dī maut" (The Death of God) in which a mill owner wants to seduce a girl working for him; "Pachān" (Recognition), in which a woman's relatives pretend not to "recognize" her after she has been recovered after being abducted; she is thus forced into prostitution; and

"Nurse" in which every male in the hospital, from the sweeper to the surgeon, lusts for the nurse's body, are all about the inhuman treatment of woman. And there are many others. The most common example of woman's exploitation is prostitution. It is a subject of significance for two reasons; first, because it shows woman's piteous condition; second, because it shows the basis of the capitalist society as a business which forces everyone to prostitution of one kind or another. "Dēdh ādmī" (One-and-a-Half Man) expounds the theme of prostitution at length. Coming from a refugee Bengali family, Paroo is forced to sell her charms to help the family live. She is arrested for illegal traffic and suffers a sentence. She returns to the "business" after completing the sentence, but now with a license. All of the people who had been responsible for her conviction are either deeply involved in the organization and control of the prostitution business or visit her as clients. Everyone gains from it, some thrive on it, even the priest who was terribly offended by Paroo's work during her early, free-lancing days. Now he comes to say prayers before the image of the god Shiva placed in every prostitute's establishment. Prostitution is an essential social institution. The "good" man in the story -- he is a man-and-a-half because of his integrity (most men, even when noble in intention, are only half-men because "a half-man has sympathy, and understanding," but not action) -- points this out to Paroo. He is proved literally correct when there is a proposal for moving the red-light district away from town and after great opposition from important members of the community, an opposition expressed in fine oratory justifying the necessity of prostitution for social health, the proposal is defeated. But Paroo throws her shoe in the most articulate leader's face.

The oppression of the poor has not killed their humanity and moral strength. In Sujan Singh's successful stories, courage, nobility and the bond of human sympathy loom large in the scene of suffering. The goodness and strength in the character of the poor and of those who are in true sympathy with them give Sujan Singh a faith in the future triumph of the oppressed and their supporters. He also entertains the same hope because of his study of the Marxian ideology. When these two hopes conjunct in a story, one gives wings to the other. But, unfortunately, very frequently they do not merge. The ideologue in Sujan Singh always seems to be ahead of his deeper experience of life. The ideological and the experiential are not in simple separation from one another, but the ideological becomes a substitute for the experiential. It is not that the ideology functions apart from the experience because it is intellectual. It seems it does so because it lacks true intellectual content. The writer has formed certain notions and based hopes on them with so much dependence that he does not take reality in a fresh intellectual grasp every time he confronts it. The necessity of current individual knowledge at the instant of his creative confrontation with life that Sujan Singh knows well is not kept in view in writing many of his stories, particularly some of the last he has published. Knowledge without currency is no knowledge from the artist's point of view. The contradiction in Sujan Singh's bad stories is not between knowledge and emotional experience, but mainly between knowledge and assumption. A slight amount of this discrepancy can be found in almost any story of his, but there are many in which there is little else but assumption, wishful thinking, sentimentality. The prime example is "Mahākavī." Balwant has hardly been in the village a few days and he has already imbibed the spirit of its life and action. Nothing could be more ludicrous than making experience come without experience in a story where the very theme is the necessity of experience for good art. The hurry to decide that you have seen when you have not really seen is responsible for many typical weaknesses in Sujan Singh's stories -- the division of mankind into monsters and men, which has a basis in truth but the truth is not always seen; good characters acting much more enlightened than their background warrants because their author is too impatient in his desire for progress to care to see or show that progress truly emerges from reality; a frequently exessive stress on plot because this helps him to manipulate the action instead of having to steer through reality; and slogan-mongering, which at some points in the author's experience has been endowed with feeling but intrudes upon many a story without a real foundation of feeling. The reason for all this appears to be that Sujan Singh is essentially a writer of pain and suffering, which also bring with it the glow of human nobility suggesting an ultimate triumph. But when this optimism becomes detached from suffering, it ceases to be real. Only when he is face-to-face with suffering does he seem to see its end.

Devinder Satarthi, though a conscious Progressive writer, may be said to have become one indirectly rather than by a direct influence of the Movement. He is primarily a student of folk culture and would have been one even without the Progressive Movement. The movement simply helped to sharpen his interest. His major concern has always been to garner and preserve the treasure of folk culture and the deeply human quality of life embodied in it. It is only in his later stories that he has begun to use the urban setting. His close contact with the people has made him acutely aware of the factors which undermine their happiness and mar the beauty of their lives. His picture of the economic pattern underlying their life is simply, but, since his focus remains on the working class, particularly in the rural area, it is accurate and, therefore, vitalizing for his art. Though somewhat exclusive, his picture of folk life is very convincing. Even his open preaching of Communism and his visions of the people rising in unison to smash the forces and symbols of oppression rather easily is neither scandalizing nor, unlike Sujan Singh's, is his optimism ever forced. As observed by M. P. Kohli:

> The stories of Satyarthi are lyrical pieces which have been attempted in the strain of folk songs. In these "lyrical notes" he has written feverishly for the cause of socialist realism. He declares in "Lal dhartī [Red Soil]: "She was resting like a *rājaswālā* maiden. The time seemed to be approaching very soon when she will procreate someone. She will deliver a promising child, who will grow into a strong man, and at the top of his voice shall he shout, Long live the plough! Now no slaves shall grow in the fields. This is the red soil."[76]

To appreciate the complexity of Satyarthi's art of story telling, it is necessary to read him. Here is a long excerpt from one of his stories:

> In those days the grain god lived in the world of Brahma. One day Brahma said, "Noble god, why don't you go live on the earth?"

With these words Chintoo started to tell his favorite story. The Gonds remembered several such stories. They are people of the jungle and of the real jungle. Like trees, their roots have gone deep into the earth. But they are poor -- habituated to hunger by birth. Looking at Chintoo, it seemed to me that he too was a god who had turned up to tell the story of the grain god to the inhabitants of the earth. It was pitch dark. In the light from the hamlet, the jungle trail nearby looked like the parting in the hair of a Gondan maiden. Again and again my glance returned and became fixed on Chintoo's wrinkled face.

The story continued:

"The god stood on the earth. But he was very tall. It took twelve men, one standing on another's shoulders to reach his head.

"One dayBrahma sent a message -- this is very hard, noble god! You will have to get smaller. You will have to see to man's comfort.

"The god reduced himself to half his size, but Brahma was not satisfied. Man's problem was not yet completely solved. He sent a message again and the god became a quarter of his original size. . . .

"Then man himself spoke: You are still too tall, my deity!

"The grain god became even smaller. Now he remained as tall as man's breast. Then, as he was only as tall as man's waist, man was very happy.

"Ears sprouted from his body. It seemed as if there stood a plant of gold.

"Man shook him and the ears fell on the ground. . . .

I thought all other deities have their temples, but the grain god, that protector of the fields from the beginning of time, lives in the open fields where every year paddy grows, milk forms in the grains as in the breasts of a pregnant girl.

Haldi said, "But now the god, travelling under the earth, has gone towards the nether world." Chintoo looked at his wife with tired eyes. A famine fierce as this he had never seen before. The land had become arid as a woman might go sterile or a new mother's breasts go dry.

Haldi said, "Like other gods, the grain god too has gone deaf."

But Chintoo asked, "But why did the grain god go deaf?"

"How can a stupid person like me tell? But deaf he has become."

Every year Haldi promised an offering to the god. Not only Haldi, every Gond woman believed it essential to make the promise of an offering. But this year the god paid no heed. The god had become annoyed for some reason. Other gods too become enraged, but the grain god should not succumb to anger.

Haldi had a three-month-old son. I took him in my lap. His complexion was not as dark as his father's. He reminded me of the color of fresh mountain honey.

Haldi said, "*Hai*! The grain god blessed me with a child, but that too in hunger and scarcity."

When the baby smiled, Haldi would begin to think that the god was putting the smile in him. But what is the meaning of this? Could the god be mocking? Then anger would surge in her heart. The god kills man with hunger and then burns him with mockery too.

Chintoo said, "If you believe me, now I have no more faith in the grain god and the story about him I have heard hundreds of times seems a lie to me."

Haldi did not know that Chintoo's sarcasm was, on the whole, superficial. This she also had begun to know that the god had been offended by the daily sight of sin.

"If you do not believe in the grain god, you at least believe in God."

"My heart doesn't accept your God either; satanic God! Where are his ruler clouds and where is He Himself sleeping? There is not a single drop of rain."

Looking at the famine-born baby I began to think, what would be that great sin that even such a big god cannot forgive man.

The famine had snatched all her beauty from Haldi. Chintoo was also beginning to forget his spring. The tree still stood there but its branches had grown old and new leaves did not sprout any more.

Haldi told me that her vivacity and hilarity had drawn Chintoo to her. At that time, she was young, a wild deer. Her nose was thick and the nostrils were not narrow either. When she went skipping and jumping from one field to another, Chintoo saw her and in his heart too a deer awakened.

Chintoo's anger at the gods keeps on rising and he utters blasphemies. Haldi is afraid.

"No, No! Beware of sin, beware of the god's rage!"

Interrupting, I said, "The fault is all man's. The god is always innocent." The night lay like a sad woman. Far off some bloodthirsty beast roared.

Chintoo said, "If these hungry lions and bears see the grain god, they will eat him raw."

Besakhoo received money and Haldi went to congratulate him. In time of hardship, even a sum of twenty-five is life five hundred. May Ramoo be always happy!

Ramoo was in Bombay. Chintoo thought. . . . If he had a brother there he would have sent him at least five, if not twenty-five, rupees. . . .

A smile spread over Ramoo's face and then it abruptly changed to seriousness. He said, "Yes, Haldi! Now the grain god lives in the palaces of Bombay. . . . Plays in money. . . . In Bombay, Haldi, where women far more beautiful than you live. . . .

Haldi said nothing. Perhaps she began to think about the days when the railroad had reached there and the grain god had gone to Bombay by the first train.

A tear which had hung in her eye, flowed down her cheek.

> Far away clouds were gathering in the sky. I said, "Today it must rain on earth."
>
> Haldi was quietly patting her baby. Perhaps she was thinking, what if the god finds beautiful women there, some day he will feel homesick. Then he will return here of his own accord.[77]

Satyarthi's Progressivism is not a quickly picked up approach to life and literature. It is born of his deep and wide experience of life and study of culture. It is, therefore, an integral part of his experience, not an extraneous perspective imposed on it. In advocating change, it also stresses the abiding relationship between change and continuity in the nature and modes of human experience, so that the change advocated does not become arbitrary propaganda. Just as Satyarthi sees the unbreakable tie between the current and the historical in time, he also sees the close connection between the local and the universal in human experience. Consequently, there is a quality in Satyarthi's writing which carries it beyond time and place without falsifying either. Although Satyarthi has devoted much of his energy to writing in languages other than Panjabi, his contribution to Panjabi literature is quite large and significant. *Kung posh* (1941), *Sonā gācī* (Red-Light District) (1950), *Tin boohiāṅ vālā ghar* (The House with Three Doors) (1961) and *Paris dā ādmī* (The Man of Paris) (1970) are some of Satyarthi's major collections of short stories.

The most prolific Panjabi short story writer, Kartar Singh Duggal, is also the most unpredictable. He has always refused to bear any label except that of being an artist. It is a measure of Sekhon's influence or perhaps that of the validity of his literary theory that an artist as independent as Duggal, in many of his stories comes closer to Sekhon's notion of Socialist Realism than many self-avowed Progressive writers. The preponderant Freudianism of his fiction is, in a sense, symptomatic of the same rebellious impulse which is a conscious element of the Progressive program. He is the first modern Panjabi writer to show effectively the complex relationships between sex and social behavior. Among male writers, his is perhaps the most accurate analysis of woman psychology. His concern in psychoanalysis is rarely just clinical; it is mostly human.

In his treatment of the folk culture of his native *pothohar* (the northwestern Panjabi, the plateau), which is the locale of his first two short story volumes, Duggal again shows his similarity with the Progressive writers in their partiality for folk life for subject matter. His picture of the rural life is lifelike and alive. The secret of Duggal's strength is that he goes directly to life without any abstract preconceived theories and though often concerned with aesthetic experience, because of close contact with life, he shows intense social involvement. Often, he even consciously begins to pursue specific Progressive goals. Most of the stories in *Agg khāṇ vālē* (The Fire Eaters) (1948) and *Nawāṅ ghar* (New House) (1951) are written with this purpose. The sympathy he shows here for the oppressed and his awareness of the exploitative basis of society are not theoretically projected into these stories but are part of his spontaneous confrontation with life. In these and other stories, Duggal takes a very constructive stand on some fundamental issues, such as human equality, war and peace, etc., and exposes the factors that inhibit healthy human relations. In spite of his freedom from any ideology, he shows a very strong, natural social commitment. The adoption of an official point of view affects his art adversely. In some stories, such as "Socialistic Pattern" and "Ik muskān vī nahīṅ" (Not Even a Single Smile) he succumbs to the temptation of combining his human sympathies with the Indian government's official policies and programs, and his work degenerates into cheap publicity.

Other major short story writers who show Progressive tendencies are Mahinder Singh Sarna and Santokh Singh Dhir. Sarna is known for his psychoanalytical approach to characterization. By delving deeply into the lower layers of their minds, he hopes to bare his characters' true nature which is generally suggestive of a basic human goodness and inspires hope for man's future. Yet basic human goodness is often overlaid with corruption and the possibility and hope of fulfillment are generally buried under fear and a sense of helplessness. Sarna's frequent theme is to show what momentous changes come or can come when innate human strength surfaces and asserts itself. In most of the stories about the 1947 riots in *Chavīāṅ dā rut* (The Season of Choppers) (1959), this theme redeems the all-engulfing inhuman holocaust. But, on the whole, in his half dozen volumes of short stories, he succeeds in showing more the humanity of the oppressed than that of the oppressor. The suggestion for redressing the situation is there but it is generally implicit not explicit. This in itself would be no drawback but for the fact that exploitation or oppression generally takes an individualistic route between the parties involved. It is not fully integrated with the total substratum of social reality. So hope or despair suggested in a situation tend to be casual, not very deep-seated, and faith in human nature and mankind's future a mere exhortation unsubstantiated by an experience deeply embedded in a social consciousness. Both Sarna and Duggal occasionally show Progressive influence and learnings; they are not, however, committed Progressives.

Santokh Singh Dhir's faith in human nature, for he too proceeds from this premise, seems less arbitary. His view of human worth seems to be derived from a strong recognition of man's need for love. One of his common themes, especially in *Sānjhī kandh* (Common Wall), is the agony of alienation between once intimate individuals, friends or relations, and their eventual reconciliation.

The central element in Dhir's stories is this positive experience of human nature. He sees two forces undermining the human quality of life. One is the natural, animal aggressiveness which Dhir's man seems to have overcome. The other is the unwholesome nature of the socio-economic system. The present system goes against the grain of humanity and suppresses it. It also revives the beast which man, according to Dhir, has generally learned to cope with. Dhir wants the social, economic, technical organization of life to serve the "human" ends of man instead of crushing man altogether or destroying his humanity. In his famous "Koī swār lopokē" (Any Passenger for Lopoke), he deplores the misuse of advances in technology to make man unhappy instead of enhancing his happiness. The story brings out the pathos of a horse-cab driver's failure to compete with the bus. "Sānjhī kandh" may be called the epitome of Dhir's message. Two neighbors clash over the construction of a wall between their houses, but in the long run, their feeling for each other prevails and they are reconciled. The wall, in this manner, ceases to be a barrier and becomes a common bond between them. It is Dhir's hope and belief that the social and material organization of life will eventually be such as to bring men closer together instead of causing division among them. The intimacy of the rural scene gives Dhir a feeling for the innate strength and goodness of man. This gives substance and strength to his political purpose and hope. Both his picture of the present plight of the underprivileged and the hope and exhortation for the future are, therefore, convincing and realistic. In the depth of his rural experience lies the vitality of his Progressive commitment.

By this criterion, Kulwant Singh Virk should also have been an effective Progressive writer from the very start, because his experience too is deep and, like Dhir and Duggal, he speaks out of direct contact with life. But, like Duggal, for long he has refused to accept any strictly social responsibility for art. Again like Duggal, however, by the very nature of his contact with life, he has tended to come round to a position similar to that of the Progressive writers, though, generally, sometimes even perversely, has disavowed any social commitment. He likes to refer to himself as a humanist rather than a Progressive writer. Yet some similarity to the Progressive writers is unmistakable in many stories in *Nawēṅ lok* (New People) (1967) and *Golhān* (Acorns) (1961).

The list of the less known Progressive short story writers is long. The more notable among them are Amrita Pritam, better known for her poetry; Dalip Singh Dip, Kartar Singh Suri, whose *Bhagwān mehngā hai* (God Is Too Expensive) has some excellent short stories and gives the promise of more to come; Gurcharan Singh, who has begun to devote most of his energies to criticism; Jaswant Singh Kanwal and Surinder Singh Narula whose mention as novelists will also suggest the quality of their short stories; and Navtej Singh. The pervasive influence of Marxism tended to affect the short story writers so much that it made them write stories to a formula. A reaction to this enervating influence engendered the opposite tendency to deny any purpose in writing. Only gradually a new generation of realistic writers is beginning to emerge. Their criticism of the current situation, though not as strictly defined as that of the Progressive writers, is distinctly a legacy of Progressivism. It has made the Panjabi short story what it is today -- the most highly developed genre in Panjabi literature.

Hypothetically, the novel should have been the best literary form for the kind of treatment of life advocated by Progressive literary criticism. Because of the breadth of its canvas, the novel provides full scope for the play of the social dialectic which must be depicted in an elaborate manner to enable literature to achieve its social purpose fully. Also inherent in the novel is the expression of class conflict and the evolution of society. The novel as a genre began in Western Europe with the rise of the bourgeoisie to supremacy in society. It reflected the interests of the bourgeoisie and the rationalistic bourgois values that replaced those of the traditional, aristocratic order. The expression of a new outlook on life was accompanied by a widening of the sphere of social experience captured in literature. Gradually, this sphere of experience expanded beyond the middle-class boundaries to encompass the entire cross section of society. The novel came to India as a Western influence. But it was not a simple borrowing. The conditions that created the form in Europe were also transplanted to India. The socio-economic and intellectual changes wrought by the British control of India led to the emergence of a new middle class with a considerably rationalistic outlook on life. Foreign political control, being a hinderance in their rise to complete supremacy, gave added urgency to middle-class aspirations. Therefore, Indian writing, particularly the new-born novel, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, expressed strong social and political concern. But very often, due to the iron hand with which the Brtish held India, the Indian writer became either cautious in his obervations about the social reality around him or unconsciously directed his sentiments into compromising channels. In either case, he failed to present reality faithfully. The Panjabi novel before independence is an example of this phenomenon. It generally remained social-reform oriented, avoiding the contradictions of the political situation. Social and moral reform, almost entirely through individual personal change is the aim of Bhai Vir Singh and Nanak Singh's novels. When the Panjabi novel did address itself to the political factor in the Indian situation, it evaded the ultimate issues by becoming sectarian. The Akali leader Tara Singh's *Bābā tegā singh* (1958), and Bhai Vir Singh's novels, so far as they show a political motivation, are completely sectarian, professing to look at reality from a Sikh perspective. Actually, they fail to capture even the Sikh experience simply because they avoid the total reality of which it is a part. Their sectarianism is a form of escape. The Progressive Movement brought the Panjabi novel to a closer confrontation with the social reality and, therefore, gave considerable depth to it. But, on the whole, it has still not succeeded in presenting the picture of Panjabi life in a convincing manner. The Progressive rationale, as it directs a writer towards a faithful protrayal of the class conflict in society, often also acts as a hinderance in the writer's attempt to establish contact with reality because of his preconceived notions about it. Due to the writers' obsession with foregone conclusions, their novels often give either a distorted picture of reality or become completely vacuous. Very rarely is this problem overcome.

The writer who comes closest to giving a realistic portrayal of the Panjabi scene in this literary form is, again, Sant Singh Sekhon. His *Lahū-miṭṭī* (Blood and Soil) (1949) also lacks the vast sweep of a great novel, but so far as it goes, the novel is an honest and impressive projection of the Panjabi scene with a focus on the peasant life.

The Progressive message in *Lahū-miṭṭī* is so implicit that one must read between the lines to see any lesson in the novel. Apparently it is simply a story about a peasant family. It tells about their hard work and suffering for three generations and ends with their attaining a modest economic success and a modicum of happiness. The time of the novel is the last half century of the British rule. The novel was written at the end of this period. The focus of the story is on the personal aspirations of the characters and politics seldom has any obvious place in them. Whatever treatment of the characters' involvement with politics or of the political events there is, can be described as merely historical rather than political. Only on reflection does one begin to see that Sekhon treats history not for its own sake but from the point of view of its bearing on the present. He treats history out of his concern for the peasantry as Bhai Vir Singh does out of his for the Sikhs. Sekhon's use of history is more incisive and openly socio-political than that of Bhai Vir Singh.

The novel opens with a description of the rather happy life of the young Bijai Singh and his wife, Daya Kaur. Bijai Singh and his father, Jagat Singh, are tenant farmers in one of the new canal colonies developed by the British regime. Jagat Singh had moved here after he had to mortgage his small ancestral farm in his old village. Because of the fertility of the new land and the supply of canal water, the family is comfortable, though they are only sharecroppers. But, unfortunately, Jagat Singh suddenly falls ill and dies. It is a great blow to the family because Bijai Singh, though a hard worker, is not endowed with the same confidence and ability in handling his affairs as his father. Yet he tries his best and does not do too badly, at least not for a while. For some time he even improves his situation. He rents more land and is able to save enough money to free his land in the old village. Daya Kaur, who is extremely self-conscious about their low status as tenants, nags him to return to their original home. Bijai Singh wants to stay until he has saved enough money to be able to add more land to his ancestral holding so that he can feel secure about his image among his kinsfolk on his return to the old village. But circumstances deteriorate. With regular cultivation, the land in the new settlement begins to lose its exceptional fertility. World War I breaks out. The high prices it brings are beneficial to the big farmer, but disastrous for the small cultivator. Children are added to the family; expenses increase. By unlucky chance, while visiting the old village, Bijai Singh becomes a victim of the high-handedness of the police. He is coerced into giving false evidence against a fellow villager accused of murder. Ridden with guilt feelings, he becomes physically unwell and ends up being an asthmatic for life. Still he clings to his dream of returning to the old village. He even builds a house for the eventual return. Being extravagant by nature, he gets carried away by his impulses and burdens himself with debt in building the house. He is also determined to educate his elder son, Madan. This taxes his financial resources to the extreme. All his property, including the new house, has to be mortgaged by the time Madan's schooling is complete. However, this marks the end of the family's sufferings. Though, as a starting lawyer, Madan's income is yet a mere pittance, the family's aspirations are realized. Bijai Singh has achieved his objective and the whole family, particularly Daya Kaur, are very happy to be able to return to their village.

The message of the novel seems to lie in the fulfillment coming at the end of a struggle over generations. The struggle is socio-economic, though it is so only by implication. The central characters are not active members of any social or political organization, but they are in a situation which is ultimately caused by economic, political factors. It calls for and gives the promise of far-reaching social and economic changes. The hardships of the small farmers are caused by the vast international economy in which they are helplessly caught because of British imperialism. Having created this situation, the government is indifferent to the plight of its subjects. Its chief aim, instead, is the mere maintenance of its control over India. Besides leaving the poor at the mercy of inexorable economic forces, it engenders a bureaucratic tyranny of the kind which causes great suffering for Bijai Singh as a result of his coercion by the police. It may be pointed out that this criticism of the British rule may make the novel historical, but it does not give it much political significance for the time of its writing. However, it can be counter-argued that the real purpose here is not merely the criticism of a specific political situation, but to stress the need for creating the right situation. There are indications in the novel that the historical movement is leading towards such a possibility. The novel touches upon the major political movements representing Indian aspirations during the period it covers. In chronological order, they suggest a generally progressing revolutionary fervour. The Gurdwara Reform Movement of the Akalis is more revolutionary than the earlier Singh Subha Movement. The terrorism of Bhagat Singh and his party is still another step forward. The Indian National Congress, which would become the ruling party of the independent India, represents the interests of the bourgeoisie and, from the standpoint of India as a whole, is not sufficiently advanced. The obvious moral is that agitation for social and economic advancement must continue even after independence.

What gives *Lahū-miṭṭī* its impressiveness as fiction is the fact that the forces against which the main characters struggle are certainly there, but remain vague. In contrast, the characters' struggle is clearly etched. Even here the political meaning is suggested rather than stated. The suggestions are conveyed through a clever symbolism. The personal attitudes and deeds of the characters represent those of their class. Bijai Singh's achievement is the triumph of the working class. His first name, meaning "victory", is quite significant. The other main characters complement him in this role. His father is his unregenerated self. He is more self-assured than his son, but is actually less sensitive. More competent as a peasant, he would have also continued to be more content in his situation and less inclined to change it. Jagat Singh (*jagat* means "world" or "mankind") is gratified to find in his daughter-in-law a self-assertiveness his son lacks. But it is an assertiveness devoid of foresight. If, due to his lack of assertiveness, Bijai Singh is less than what his father and wife are, he is also more because of his foresight and the ability for altruistic self-negation. If he often seems spineless, it is because of his realization that in his position he cannot win; if he sometimes neglects his own affairs, it is to attend to the problems of his kinsfolk who, unlike his wife, have a great regard for his intelligence and sincerity. If he becomes extravagant, it is the result of an expansiveness of spirit rather than petty egoism. And if he denies himself even some of the basic necessities he can have, and thus imposes a similar denial on other members of his family, it is with the aim of extricating the family from the socio-economic morass forever. He does not really lack the self-interest so dear to his wife; he sees it in a different perspective. Madan (the name suggests desire and enjoyment of life) considers himself a blend of his mother's concern for immediate self-interest and his father's intelligence. Actually, both the elements are already there in Bijai Singh's character, but they generally do not harmonize. It is only in his successful resolve to put Madan through college that they blend fully. Madan is thus literally an embodiment of his father's achievement, and, being so, represents the achievement of a class instead of an individual. For the class interest cannot be realized without self-sacrifice and altruism. Bijai Singh is temperamentally inclined towards serving the general interests instead of his own. The anti-imperialistic movements have a great appeal for him. He is inspired by the examples of political heroes and martyrs. Darkly, he perceives that his own situation is a consequence of the political process. His spirit rebels against oppression. Normally, his rebelliousness remains repressed but at least once it explodes in a spell of insanity during which he sees himself a political hero acting as a savior of the underdog. It is his great desire that Madan should become a great political leader. This would be a highly honorable thing for him. In his fantasies, Bijai Singh often bypasses the contradiction between this desire and the need for security. He is secretly happy to notice Madan's inclination towards politics. Only when Madan becomes very serious about entering politics does Bijai Singh get really scared and dissuades his son from doing so. Madan agrees and becomes a lawyer. But the transformation of Bijai Singh into Madan has already occurred. The latter carries the political inclination of his father in a more concrete and clear form, though he too is not active in politics. The awakening in itself is a harbinger of salvation. Moreover, there is nothing to keep a lawyer from entering politics someday. Bijai Singh is fulfilled.

Bijai Singh's triumph, being one of the working class, is mankind's itself. The real subject of the novel seems to be the humanity of Bijai Singh and of the other characters in his circle. It is mostly underlined negatively, as being denied and repressed. To begin with, there is the sheer physical deprivation accompanied by endless hard work. More significantly suggesting the denial of humanity are the humiliation and indignities suffered by Bijai Singh. Still more important to notice are the bickerings between him and his wife, the lack of love and regard for him on her and their children's part. Their circumstances deny them their basic physical and emotional needs and by doing so tend to inhibit the very springs of humanity. But the springs never dry up. Humanity reasserts itself continually. It is worth noticing that there are no strongly etched evil characters in the novel. They remain more in the nature of impersonal forces working behind the scenes, never becoming conspicuous in the foreground. They are alien elements entering the human scene to disrupt it; but, in the long run, humanity wins. In truth, it had never lost. For instance, in spite of the wedge driven between Bijai Singh and Harnam Singh by the corrupt police, the two have never borne malice for each other. It is out of such positive experience of humanity that the novel is born.

The experience gives authenticity and life to the novel. Sekhon is an ideologue, but his ideology is vitally embedded in his experience. The author's emotional involvement with the life treated obviates the need for an exposition of the ideology. It is possible to read the novel as a narrative without any lesson. Still, perhaps because it is a first novel, or also because the ideological axe, though hidden, is always there, Sekhon's *Lahū-miṭṭī* as a picture of the peasant life remains considerably thin. It may be filled in imaginatively by those who share the author's experience of this life, but for the uninitiated, it is sketchy. The characters too have a similar thinness. They are more described than allowed to develop by themselves through dialogue or concrete action. *Lahū-miṭṭī* shows the promise of a novelist who can write with profound political implications without becoming a mere polemicist; but a great novel it is not.

The ideology inherent in Sekhon's novel has been widely and explicitly applied in the post-independence Panjabi novel. Unlike Sekhon, many novelists have espoused the cause of the exploited by specifically treating their political confrontation with their exploiters. Such appears to be the motivation of Kesar Singh's *Lehr vadhdi gai* (The Wave Rolled On) (1953). The novel is set in South East Asia during World War II. It deals with the efforts of the Indian community in the area leading to the formation of the Indian National Army to liberate India. The fundamental rationale for opposition to British imperialism lies in its economic evil, the exploitation of the working classes in the colonies. Some zealous Indians decide to take advantage of the relatively weak British position during the early phase of the war. They are aware of the fact that the Japanese are as imperialistic as the British, but they hope to use the Japanese successes to secure India's freedom and not merely exchange one imperial power for another. They endeavor to give their movement a working-class image. Large numbers of Indians work as laborers on rubber plantations and other places in Southeast Asia. There is a movement for unionization among them. The workers are becoming daring. The instigators of a military sedition in the British Indian army circulate the photograph of a laborer, who publicly insults the Union Jack as a form of political propaganda to arouse the Indian soldiers. Organization of workers and welfare work among the poor are parts of the movement, but its real stress is on an organized military uprising. In its early phase it takes the form of infiltrating the British Indian Army based in the area to sway the Indian officers and soldiery to their side. After the Japanese occupation of the area, it leads to the creation of a new army to march on India.

The Indian National Army's initial successes are reversed with the Japanese defeat following the American use of the atomic bomb. But it continues what, from the nebulous description in the novel, appears to be guerilla warfare against the British. All the while it has a fairly organized financial and moral support of the Indian population. Directly or indirectly, the Indians also join hands with another exploited group, the Chinese. So the wave moves on. Instead of being a war for India's freedom, it becomes one for the liberation of the masses in Southeast Asia in particular and Asia in general.

In spite of the general purport occasionally hinted at from the very beginning of the novel, the overall impression it gives is one of treating a specific political event for its own sake instead of being concerned with a general economic and political message. It has very little in it that is of current significance. It is true that there are elements which, properly developed, could have acquired abiding importance. For example, the plight of the Indian laborers, the puzzlement of a domestic servant over his menial position in the house of an affluent man who is actively involved in the political struggle, and the same character's memories of the suppression of the lower classes by the landed gentry in his village in the Panjab hills -- all suggest a message of lasting socio-economic significance. But the novel does not address itself mainly to these issues. It too easily equates their resolution with the war against the British. The basic issues are glossed over, often with contradictions, and overlaid by an interest in one specific event, a military confrontation with the British. Bourgeois characters with bourgeois aspirations lead in the confrontation. The goal of freedom is sentimentalized instead of emerging from a probing view of life. The novel is political, not because of a profound outlook on life, but only in the sense that it celebrates a particular political event. In recording the event, it does describe some of the tactics connected with political-military insurrection, but the treatment fails to bring out the full dynamics of even this process. Therefore, the deliberate exclusion of almost all leading historical figures actually involved in the struggle does not yield, as it is intended to yield, a concrete picture of life. The characters remain extremely vague and generally move in an atmosphere of a complete vacuum. If there is any political inspiration to be derived from the novel, it is sentimental and not born of a deep contact with political reality.

Nanak Singh, too, when he inclines towards Progressivism, as he does in *Ādam khor* (The Man-Eater) and *Ik miān do talwārāh* (Two Swords in One Sheath), (1967) is superficial. *Ādam khor* is written in praise of Communist activity in India as Nanak Singh sees and endorses it. It accuses the Indian National Congress of representating only the moneyed class. Therefore, as a ruling party, the Congress has failed to deliver the goods. Communism is the only right answer. The work of the Communist party is shown by the involvement of two families, one very rich, the other penniless. The leading spirit of the Party is Bharati, a fictitious character. The rich family is that of a millionaire, Thakur Singh, whose wife, Amar Kaur, lives in the old part of the city (Ludhiana) and he himself lives in his bungalow in the new section. They have an adopted son, Pritpal, who, estranged from Thakur Singh, has left home and, by chance, running into Bharati, a former college classmate of his, decides to join him in the Party's work. The reason for his estrangement from his father is his disgust with the latter's cruelty and lustfulness. He resents Thakur Singh's mistreatment of Amar Kaur. His father's latest excess has been his affair with a Christian nurse, whom he eventually marries. Pritpal finds this insult to his mother too much to bear and leaves home. After joining Bharati, he devotes all his time to the work of the Party, but occasionally comes to see his mother or to get money from her for the Party.

In the meantime, Amar Kaur becomes acquainted with her new neighbor, Sulochna, whose husband, Shangara Singh, having lost a leg as a policeman in a force sent to suppress the Communist uprising in Telengana, is now jobless. Amar Kaur takes this family under her wing and is going to get Shangara Singh a job with her husband. Thakur Singh happens to see Sulochna at Amar Kaur's place and instantaneously becomes infatuated with her. He has tired of his Christian wife and plans to have her killed by his faithful driver. But her uncle had also come to live with her. Thakur Singh inveigles Shangara Singh into murdering the girl's uncle and sends him away to be fitted with an artificial leg. He has a scheme to ensnare Sulochna in his absence. But Pritpal sees through his father's design and Thakur Singh is exposed. Sulochna goes to live with Bharati because he is very ill and needs someone to take care of him. Learning about Thakur Singh's intentions about Sulochna and the murders of his Christian wife along with her uncle, Amar Kaur undergoes a sea change in character. Instead of tolerating Thakur Singh's actions submissively as she has done all her life, she now stands up to him and leaves her house to join Bharati and Sulochna. Thakur Singh recalls Shangara Singh before he is fitted with the artificial leg. He still hopes to use him as a bait to trap Sulochna. But Sulochna, singlehanded, goes to Thakur Singh's bungalow, faces him with a pistol in her hand, and brings her husband back. Shangara Singh shoots himself out of self-disgust, but before doing so, he also shoots his two brothers who had deprived him of his inheritance. Thakur Singh is penitent and puts himself and his resources at the disposal of Bharati's party.

The plot had to be traced here with some detail because it is the mainstay of the novel. The novelist achieves his purpose through plot manipulation. He is undoubtedly aware of other factors that determine the action in the novel. These are the capitalistic economy, the current political situation which supports it, the force of tradition, human nature, and a new ideology and political practice espousing Socialism. In fact, to show the interaction of these factors and the consequent victory of Socialism and what the author considers to be the essential human nature are the conscious purposes in the novel. Nanak Singh expounds the evils of capitalism at length. He sees very clearly that the basis of capitalistic economy and politics is the misappropriation and misuse of the labor of the many by a few. He points out how tradition, by demanding conformity, perpetuates injustice. The chief example of such conformity is Amar Kaur, who for long considers it very unseemly to rebel against her husband's selfishness. Nanak Singh advocates and foresees the emergence of a new order based on a concern for the interests of all instead of the protection of the interests of only the economically successful. Yet in all these observations and their incorporation into the warp and woof of the novel, he betrays a naivete and superficiality in his understanding of social, economic and political processes. It is true that he often succeeds in conveying an impression of the vast expanse of these processes, but of their complexity and inexorability he has no inkling. He sees the social and economic processes as dependent on simple individual choices and forces the right choices on his characters. Therefore, his characters are mere puppets created for or easily changed to answer his view of life. It is all very well to talk about forcing Thakur Singh to reform and usher in Socialism by winning elections without the slightest use of violence. The growth of the new in the womb of the old and the consequent pangs of its birth are things for which such talk has no relevance. Nanak Singh's Socialist movement seems like a party of friends setting out for a picnic.

Ik miān do talwārān, a eulogy to the great Indian revolutionary, Kartar Singh Sarabha, is even more sentimental than *Ādam khor* and shows little contact with the historical or political reality of the movement led by the protagonist.

The novel that comes closest to being a full portrayal of the dynamics of political activity is Jaswant Singh Kanwal's *Rāt bākī hai* (The Night is Not Yet Over) (1955). Its specific subject is the land tenants' agitation in the Panjab during the 1950s, but the particular event is generalized into a historical class conflict between the landlords and the peasantry, the exploiters and the workers. The hero, Charan, a peasant's son without a job after graduating from high school, becomes involved in the peasants' struggle for land rights and decides to devote himself completely to politics. Joining the Communist Peasants' Party, he becomes its leading spirit. The Party's organization of the peasants is so effective that the usual methods of their suppression by the landlords, such as use of violence, or instigation of a fight involving peasants in order to have them arrested, to have their crops reaped in their absence, are utterly ineffectual. Thanks to the work of the Party, the peasants are firmly united, can defend themselves physically against any aggression and are alert to any schemes or tricks of the adversary. The landlords are compelled to unite too and use their influence with the government and the police to scare the peasants into submission or to buy off Charan. But all to no purpose. The die is cast. The peasants must come to their own and the landed artistocracy fall. But the struggle is not yet over. Before the people triumph, they must make many sacrifices. Charan is arrested on some trumped-up charges. He dies as a result of the torture inflicted on him to extort a false confession. Charan's death is another nail in the coffin of the unjust order. It will still be some time before the new order emerges. Though the dawn will come, the night is not yet over.

So, in the meantime, man suffers. The novel is more a story of this suffering than of the eventual salvation. It is the story of the suffering caused by man's inability to relate to other men on fully human terms instead of being joined or divided as members of particular social classes. Class interests create insurmountable barriers among men. The landlord Narinderpal Singh is forced to guard what he considers his hereditary rights. Only if the tenants would be docile enough to let him remain the genial man he wants to be! His son Joginderpal and Charan have friendly feelings towards each other. They even remain friends of a sort throughout but the clash of class interests never lets their friendship develop fully.

The most prominent failure in human relationships is the failure of man-woman love. One form it takes is the coercion of womankind as a class. But its chief form is the separation of lovers by economic differences between their classes. *Rāt bākī hai* is as much a romantic as a political novel. It is romantic because it is political and vice versa. The romantic symbolizes as well as actualizes the political import. Charan is in love with a physician's daughter, Raj. Charan realizes that the doctor would never consent to her marriage to him, and in spite of the girl's insistence, he would not elope with her because it would be an exceptional solution to a general problem. It would only render him unfit for the work, which alone will provide a final solution. One must perforce live in and according to the old order while it is still there. So sacrificing love, Charan marries the orphan daughter of a great revolutionary, an act symbolic of his marriage to politics which alone will make true marriages possible. Raj is married to Joginderpal, who has callously abandoned his first wife. Charan and Raj still love each other and manage to meet once in a while, but their relationship only points out the need for love and not its realization. The burden is unbearable for Raj. In her depression, she becomes a consumptive and dies, literally embodying the stifling of humanity in the current social order. But before she dies, she has given birth to a son and has persuaded her husband to bring his first wife to raise the baby. These appear to be signs of regeneration. The treatment of baffled love gives the novel deep poignancy. It imbues it with poetry expressing sentiments poetry has been long used to express. It is not without significance that there is a considerable amount of formal poetic writing integrated into the novel.

Each chapter begins and ends with a verse couplet. These verses express the total human aspirations in relation to their social context. Their language is often that of traditional love poetry in Panjabi. The element of love gives the novel an emotional intensity, an imaginative richness and an esthetic appeal. Yet it must be said that the treatment of love sometimes begins to seem excessive and over-mannerized. It is true that love is the central reality of human life and, as such, is an apt symbol of all human aspirations. But it cannot be a substitute for the entire reality of human existence. It appears to become one in *Rāt bākī hai*. So, experientially, the novel verges on being a mere love story. The socio-political theme is very much there as a constant reference, not the ground on which the theme of love develops. The reason for this is that the treatment of the love story as such serves as an escape from the need to capture the dialectic of the entire socio-political process directly. Besides being a gigantic and exacting task for the novelist anywhere, the portrayal of this reality involves a special problem for the Panjabi novelist who makes revolutionary politics his subject. Before the revolutionary struggle gathers considerable strength, it is in the nature of such politics to look to the future in preparing for the impending struggle and its glorious promise. Even if a novelist were himself actively engaged in revolutionary politics (and there are numerous factors which keep such an individual from being a novelist), he would still need to make a tremendous imaginative effort to project this future. For the outsider the task is even harder. He has to depend on his imagination for the inner reality of whatever current revolutionary activity there is. So what with the difficulty inherent in a full portrayal of the socio-political dialectic as such, and the added disadvantage of a writer's lack of real contact with this reality, the Panjabi political novel falls short of giving a convincing direct picture of reality. Its presentation either tends to take the form of a lifeless statement or, consciously or unconsciously, develops into a simplified, symbolic expression such as the romantic treatment of love. The stress on love in the story is to a great extent instilled and facilitated by the Panjabi literary tradition which abounds in examples of a similar treatment of love. The writer is saved a considerable amount of effort in following these examples instead of having to address himself directly even to the reality of love. Though Charan and Raj have greater reality of character than the lovers of literary convention, even as lovers they tend to be stereotypes. As a comment on the relative inability of the novelist to draw fully a picture of reality, the characters that leave a relatively lasting impression on the reader are Joginderpal and, next to him, his father. Perhaps this is due to their being part of that reality which requires little effort to see. For the rest, the novel lapses into unreality. Kanwal seems to force his protagonist to abandon love and life to make him fit a sentimentalized version of reality. Love and life are a reality to hard to face.

The complex of reality is almost totally non-existent in Kanwal's *Rūp dhārā* (The Source of Beauty) (1956). The novel is primarily a series of anecdotal threads without deep roots in the social process. Except towards the end of the novel, very little of what happens to Rup, the heroine, has any general meaning. The purpose of the novel is to lead her into politics. But the author arrives there by a most circuitous route. The story of her mother's unhappy marriage, her own marriage to the young man she loves and the first phase of their married life are all meant to prepare Rup for her ultimate role. They point out the harshness of the woman's lot and serve to stir self-assertion in her. But her mother's suffering and her own trials as treated in the novel seem incidental instead of being the inevitable outcome of the broad social reality around them. So is Rup's harassment by the lecherous truck driver, Jugga, during the period her husband is away and she is studying to be a teacher. Only after she becomes a teacher and comes into contact with a local Communist does the action of the story begin to touch upon the broad social backdrop. But even then reality undergoes a simplification betraying an underlying wishfulness. The group she has become a member of is practically in control of everything. This may be construed as the novelist's faith in and enthusiasm for the "Marxian" goals of this group, but it is also a less then faithful picture of the real situation.

Kanwal is somewhat more authentic and convincing when he depicts and analyzes the relations between various classes in society and the effect of class interest in individuals without dealing directly with the political action resulting from these relations. In *Hānī* (Mates) (1961), he very successfully conveys the cruelty of the socio-economic barriers that separate lovers. They can be surmounted only by superhuman courage and effort though often these too fail. The novel tells the story of the love of two poor girls, one from the sweeper and the other from the water-carrier caste. Both are very daring. The water-carrier girl is helped by the sweeper girl, who has her boyfriend, a formidable young man of the farming caste, to use his influence in getting the water-carrier girl married according to her desire, in the face of great social opposition. But she herself can never marry her *jāt* boyfriend. The novel depicts the cruelty of the situation, but there is little suggestion of a clear Progressive answer to it. The call to action there is, but it is muddled. The Progressive novel appears to have generally lapsed into this kind of agitated but not very clear criticism of the social conditions. Novelists other than Kanawal, such as Gurdial Singh, who wrote *Marhī dā dīvā* (A Lamp for the Dead) (1964), have also written novels of this kind.

Besides Sekhon, the novelist who has studied and tried to apply Marxism thoroughly in his writing is Surinder Singh Narula. Narula's application of Marxian ideology in his fiction is more obvious than Sekhon's. This is not to say that he uses literature to deliver political harangues. When he says "It is my belief that in the present century the purpose of literature is to resolve the contradictions of imperialistic capitalism and to prepare the readers for the egalitarian age,"[78] he does not aim to preach direct sermons, but, like Sekhon, only suggest through the action of his stories the need and inevitability of a classless society. Still there is a difference. Whereas Sekhon, by presenting a picture of life, lets the picture suggest Marxian observations and conclusions, Narula pieces his stories together in the light of Marxian ideology. "Doing this requires a great deal of labor and a long training, exactly in the same manner as for any other task."[79] Since his aim is to show the historical movement of the human reality, he does a considerable amount of research to be able to draw a truthful picture of this movement. He combines the information so garnered with his personal experience, but on the whole, his obsession with thoroughness makes him rely more on documentary information than his personal experience. As a result, his novels acquire a patchwork quality and fail to create the illusion of a lifelike reality. Even novels dealing with the contemporary scene exhibit this weakness, but it is a particularly characteristic feature of the novels set in the past. And being ultimately concerned with showing the progress of society in history, Narula again and again turns to the past in his novels. He has written ten novels, some of them an attempt to recreate history, others trying to capture it in the making. With two exceptions, the setting is always urban.

The first novel, *Peo puttar* (Father and Son) (1946) is the story of Narula's home town, Amritsar, from 1896 to 1918. The historical picture of the town is built around the story of a man whose father had participated in the rebellious Nāmdhāri Movement, and after its suppression, spent his life in exile to avoid being captured by the British. The action expands to show the social, political and economic developments in the Panjab. The tyranny of imperialism, the rise of Indian capitalism, and the start of social and political ferment in the form of reformist and revolutionary organizations are all included in the picture. The changes occurring in middle-class family life due to modern influences are well noticed. *Peo puttar* is a very ambitious novel and a fairly successful one. It provides considerable insight into the early twentieth-century history of the Panjab and in an interesting manner. But it rarely creates the impression of inevitability in its historical reconstruction.

Raṅg mahal (The Pleasure Palace) (1950) is a blend of Marxian and Freudian commentary on human unhappiness and morbidity. The combination of Freud with Marx is a typical characteristic of most Progressives' thinking. The pleasure palace is the house of a retired deputy commissioner whose depravity, made possible by his wealth and influence, pushes all his family -- wife, son and daughters -- into one form of morbidity or another. After long suffering in this upper middle-class existence, the family, or rather whatever is left of it, is saved by the influence of a trade-union leader and his friend, a young man who has joined the British Indian Army because it was engaged in a war against Fascism. As an intellectual explanation of the problems of middle-class existence, *Raṅg mahal* is quite valid, but the process by which these problems develop in the novel does not seem to achieve the inexorable quality it is supposed to have in theory. Similarly, the resolution of these problems is also forced.

Jagrātā (Vigil) is a short novel about the effects of the economic depression of 1928-29. It depicts the life of the factory workers, stressing their poverty, helplessness and their wrong attitudes and behavior resulting from their circumstances. It is a story focusing on the economic exploitation of the working class. But Narula's passion for giving the total background of the action in his stories brings in the description of such events as the Arya Samaj Movement of the period without linking it fully with the meaning of the main action.

The workers' life and their relations with the capitalists are portrayed more ambitiously in *Dīn tē duniyā* (Faith and the World) (1951). It is partly the story of the rise of a lower-class individual to riches, presumably a statement of the rise of capitalism in India, and partly the story of the class conflict between the capitalists and labor. The contradiction is revealed mainly through the cataclysmic religious riots of 1947. This event brings out the relation between man's worldly interests and "religion." It is the capitalists' interest to keep the workers divided and they use religion to foster this division. The interest of the workers is to be united and rise above religious differences in their confrontation with their exploiters. Enlightened trade unionists of different religious origins try to organize labor not only to fight for their rights, but also to avert the religious riots, though their efforts are defeated by the machinations of the capitalists. The Indian capitalists themselves are shown to be the stooges of imperialism which represents international capitalism. The partition of India and the division among Hindus and Muslims are British creations.

But the novel also shows the contradictions within the working class. The workers organizing a fight against the capitalists meet a great deal of opposition from other workers who consider it a negation of the values they have grown up with. Then there are more mundane causes of division among the laborers, those in a slightly better economic condition than others trying to obstruct the organizational work. All this gives considerable complexity to the novel. Still the novel leaves the impression of being an analysis of economic reality rather than a picture of the human reality based on the economic.

Lok dushman (Enemy of the People) (1952) is Narula's first novel with a rural setting. Here he shows the exploitation of the land workers and offers a remedy for it in unionization. The workers get organized and launch a successful, non-violent agitation. To give the novel a semblance of reality, Narula tries to fill in the novel the entire complex of relations between the landlords and tenants, the government officials and the people, the religious authority and their congregation etc. He also gives studiously conceived touches of natural description for the sake of realism. The effort is impressive. But Narula's lack of first hand experience of the countryside shows through. The major characters are drawn as extreme examples of good and evil. The tenants' unionization strikes as wishfulness. Non-violence does not seem to accord with Narula's otherwise thoroughly revolutionary outlook.

Nīlībār (1955) portrays the conflict between the cattle-herding gypsies, who were early inhabitants of the area, and the late-arriving tribes such as Sayyads and Oureshis,who occupied much of their land and with the constructions of the canals by the British, were supported by the latter in ousting the gypsies from the land completely. Thus driven into poverty, the gypsies take to a criminal and "sinful" life. They are shown a way out of this situation by Hamilton, who helps them become organized, change their way and get their due in society. This process of "civilization" does not suit the land-owning class and they counteract it forcefully. Narula has tried to give life to his documentary information with the force of his imagination. The vast panorama of gypsy life is a very striking part of the novel. As a whole, however, the novel betrays the author's lack of authentic experience.

In *Jag-bītī* (The Tale of the World) (1954) he returns to the scene of his early life. The novel traces the evolution of this scene over the last three generations. Economic factors have shaped political, social and cultural developments and the entire pattern of life has changed. Now instead of human relations, money is the main social nexus. The novel is crowded with detail as to changes in customs, attitudes, values and the physical scene. The interrelationships between day to day life and large economic, political, social, religious, and cultural developments are described. The author's intellectual preoccupation with these connections keeps the novel from achieving a lifelike intensity.

In *Dil daryā* (The Heart's River) Narula tries to remedy the diffuseness of structure inherent in his concern for drawing a full picture of the social reality; *Dil daryā* is his most well plotted novel. The story revolves around a vacillating, middle-class artist, whose life becomes involved with that of four women from different sectors of the middle-class world. One of them is the wife of a rich and busy barrister who values or neglects her as a piece of property, another a high society girl, the third the wife of a rightist religious-political leader and the last a Communist worker engaged in the work of fostering amity among the various religious communities. The backdrop of the story is the bloody massacre of 1947. The novel depicts the malaise of upper middle-class existence, the continuation of tattered inhuman values, or their utter loss without the creation of new wholesome ones, vacuous mimicry of the West, or a fake commitment to tradition to serve selfish, inhuman purposes. The middle-class psychology, the psychology of infantile, insane selfishness, has a causal connection with the catastrophe of the communal riots. The novel is an incisive exposé of middle-class sham. But despite Narula's Progressive views, the criticism is mainly negative. The problem is described forcefully, but its solution is not suggested with the same impact. The approval of the steps taken by the government to create peace and stability weakens the conclusions implicit in the presentation of the situation. The novelist appears to have skirted the real issue and somewhat compromised with the status quo. The relation between the upper middle-class and the government policies is not fully kept in mind.

Alūṇī sil (Saltless Rock) (1952) takes up the story of Amritsar where *Peo puttar* ends. The action of the novel develops around the Sikh agitation to acquire control of the Golden Temple from its degenerate priests. Historically, that movement was Progressive because it was anti-feudalistic. The priests were supported in their claims of ownership by the British rulers who tried to crush the agitation by force but were unsuccessful. Narula includes Muslims and Hindus on the side of the Sikhs in their fight for occupation of the *gurdwārā*. He also points out the superstitious nature of many practices and beliefs associated with religion. All this helps to reduce the parochial character of the novel. Despite these attempts, however, the novel is mainly parochial and does not fully indicate the ultimate dangers inherent in religious movements, no matter how Progressive they may be at the moment.

Narula's last novel, *Gallāṅ din rāt dīāṅ* (Talk of Day and Night) (1966) depicts the contemporary Indian scene. Here, once again, Narula deals with the present confusion of values caused by the denudation of the old and the failure of the new to arise. The confusion is making those who are well-off more selfish than ever, yet also unhappier. By their action they also cause others' unhappiness. Most people are mentally sick because most people act from the force of habit, without thinking clearly. They are carried by the historical momentum of society. The novel conveys the dismal state of affairs with considerable effectiveness. But again, like *Dil daryā*, it gives mainly one side of the picture. It does not show the clear promise of a better future growing out of the decaying old order. Narula may be correct in giving a pessimistic impression about the present Indian situation, but we know that this is far from being his own intent.

Narula's contribution to the Panjabi novel, Progressive and otherwise, is very significant, both in volume and quality. His novels provide an objective insight into the Panjabi social reality and suggest a model for other Panjabi novelists for capturing the social reality in depth in their fiction, even though his own treatment of it rarely acquires a truly artistic quality.

The real deluge of Progressive influence in Panjabi literature came in poetry. Whereas in other genres the influence was, on the whole, salutary, here it seems to have also had a good deal of adverse effects. This is because the element of intellectuality has a more central place in other genres than in poetry. It renders them more suitable for a predominantly intellectual interpretation of reality and for communicating clear and consciously-conceived attitudes. In poetry such attitudes can prove to be very inhibiting. This is not to say that good poetry with conscious purpose is impossible. Panjabi has produced some excellent poetry of purpose, but only if the poet possessed complete intellectual honesty and a genuine disposition towards his professed goals. Quite often, however, the intellectual and the emotional attitudes clash.

Such seems to be the case with the early Progressive poetry of the first eminent poet and Sant Singh Sekhon's close associate at Khalsa College, Mohan Singh. He was already a successful poet when he began to blend Progressive themes into his poetry. Because of the nature of his personal emotional experience and the influence of romantic Panjabi, Persian and Urdu poetry, he wrote poetry in which the dominant note was one of fulfillment sought in chiefly emotional and esthetic terms. The agony and ecstasy of this quest were not entirely personal. That was and still is, the secret of his success. In *Sāvē pattar* (Green Leaves), *Kusumbhrā adhvātē* (Midway), his personal feelings touched on the universal, giving his writing the wide affinity essential for good poetry. But when he tried deliberately to identify with a strictly specific way of thinking and with a class to which he did not belong, his feelings became falsified and rang hollow. Nothing illustrates better this false step than the very poem written as a profession of the new faith, "Taj Mahal," the protest part of which, in comparison with Sahir Ludhiavni's famous Urdu poem of the same title, is rather banal:

> Suddenly the dome, an egg,
> Was crushed, the shell is shambles lay;
> Pleas and wails and loud laments
> Touched the sky, far, far, away.

A flood, the working women came;
With them were coutless men
Carrying adzes, presses, shovels,
In forced labor trains.

With babies clinging to their breasts
The mothers busied with their chores;
In their eyes were welling tears
In their breasts were sighs and woes.

Their stomachs, leather buckets hung,
Their necks were thin like beans,
Their hands were with blisters filled,
Wide cracks in feet, ravines.

Still the men who made them work,
Driving them with whips
On bodies of these hapless men,
Kept adding swelling strips.

When the sight of laborers thus
Did fall upon my eye,
Mad and writhing with a pain
My soul began to cry:

"Is that beauty true indeed,
Or merely a delusion
If it nourished on the woes
Of poor and working millions?"

What is more, this part, with its lack of feeling, is in striking contrast with the Taj. The poet, in forcing himself to deny his experience of beauty, tries to adopt a new meaning in life, but it is beyond him. The trouble is that though he sees the injustice of exploitation and feels guilty about enjoying the beautiful at the expense of other human beings, he can neither give up the very human pursuit of beauty, nor fully share and create the humanity in the workers' suffering. The guilt feeling is his and suffering is the workers'. Guilt, so far as it is suffering, is a selfish suffering, not altruistic. It is suffering in vain. It confuses the guilt-ridden person and makes him life-negating. The answer is to accept one's own humanity and help others to realize theirs. Not to abandon your own in trying to be someone else. Love of beauty comes naturally to Mohan Singh. Lack of beauty in life oppresses him sorely. That is the chief kind of suffering he knows. It is not the same as the suffering of the working class. No wonder that when he sees the Taj, it fills him with a sensuous rapture; but when by the same descriptive technique he raises before him the vision of the crowd of exploited laborers, the ugliness of it comes through, but not the suffering of those in it. Even the ugliness is seen from the poet's point of view, not the subjects'. The poet must work out a solution in terms of his own experience. Failing to capture others' experience, he must strive for conditions in which others -- everyone -- can have an experience of the kind that is meaningful to himself. Why must he? Because, otherwise, first of all, he becomes guilt-ridden and his own enjoyment of life is galled.

Secondly, under the present capitalist system, in a society torn by class conflict, there is not enough beauty even for his own fulfillment. Only by revolutionizing that situation can there be enough for one and all. The creation of a beautiful world is the only way by which the poet can at once fulfill himself and see others fulfill themselves as he is. He cannot share their suffering nor they his, but they can create a happiness which all share, a happiness in creating which the poet leads, as a poet should. In reaching this goal, they rise above their suffering, their class situations, and meet in common humanity. It is obvious that meeting in suffering is not real meeting. Real meeting begins with the creation of happiness, or to some extent, on the way to it. Mohan Singh has written much poetry which expresses this kind of quest for happiness and it is moving poetry indeed. But he arrives at this clarity of vision and feeling gradually and even now does not always maintain it. This in spite of the fact that he was the first leading poet to be the closest to the central figure in *pragtīvād* in Panjabi, Sant Singh Sekhon. Mohan Singh was also the foremost literary journalist of Panjabi who created channels for the growth of Progressive writing.[80]

Mohan Singh has written several volumes of poetry: *Sāvē pattar* (Green Leaves) (1936), *Kasumbhṛa* (Saflower) (1939), *Adhvātē* (Midway) (1944), *Kach-sach* (Illusion-Reality) (1950), *Āvāzāṅ* (Calls) (1954), *Vaḍḍā vēlā* (Late Morning) (1958), *Jandrē* (Locks) (1964), *Jaimīr* (1968).

From the earliest days in his writing career, Mohan Singh had expressed sometimes a vague at other times an intense feeling of pain at the loss of beauty or lack of beauty and happiness in life; but it was either overcome by the intermittent periods of intense joy or fantasy, or coped with in a mood of philosophical acceptance of the emptiness of worldly existence, or simply dismissed and relegated to the back of the poet's mind. But from the very beginning, his poetry reflects the recognition of life's meaning in strictly human, worldly terms as a cardinal feature of his temperament:

> Stay, impatient Death!
> I am not yet free to leave.

"Maut nūṅ" (To Death) of *Sāvē pattar* is a direct expression of the desire to achieve the full meaning of human existence. Mohan Singh's first long poem, "Rabb," (God), is an attempt to look at God from the human, even rational, viewpoint:

> For fear of being a *kāfir*, do not fail to inquire, my friend;
> Better to be an inquiring unbeliever than to believe without
> knowing for oneself.

But mostly Mohan Singh's love of human life appears in the form of a romantic picture of life. Many such lovely pictures are found in *Sāvē pattar*, the most notable being "Ambi dā būṭā" (Under the Mango Tree) describing the meeting of a bride with her soldier bridegroom who has returned from campaigns in distant lands. Above all, there is the poem titled "Jīvan" (Life) in which the poet refuses to accompany the angels sent by God with the offer to escort him to heaven. The vivid picture of heaven's beauty leaves him cold. In such a place life cannot be real:

> Life is change and acquiring different colors;
> A living cruel man is superior to a hundred dead saints.
> Tears are dearer than pearls,
> Hells better than heavens, because there is the strife of life.

But the negative side of his world begins to show itself. "Main nahīṅ rehṇā tērē garāṅ" (I Will Not Stay in Your Town) is addressed to the world, imagined as a girl:

> Where brothers swallow brothers,
> Smash their heads and leave them unsheltered, in the heat,
> Where countless tons of iron
> Are turned to chains and cuffs,
> Where jails and prison walls
> Run for many miles,
> Where in the name of religion
> Many rivers of blood have flowed,
> Where love of one's country
> The tyrants consider a sin.

It is a world in which the noble suffer. The crucifixion of Jesus is not a solitary example. The poet makes a gesture of turning his back on all this. From the standpoint of Mohan Singh's later Progressivism, it is important to notice a hint of the political and social cause of evil and the symbol, the love of a girl, which stands for the love of life -- the realization of freedom, human love, beauty, love of place, in short, the attainment of happiness in a truly human fashion. Any of these factors essential for meaning in human life may be treated directly in Mohan Singh's poetry, but mostly they are symbolized and suggested singly or together by man-woman love. As the social reasons undermining the possibility of a happy human life become more clear, the use of love as a symbol for the latter will become more rigidly mannerized, so much so that the symbolic allusions to love will appear to be literal references to love. The well known rejection of love particularly of woman's love, in Indian civilization, makes love a suitable symbol of life. Mans', especially the powerful man's, failure to appreciate woman's love is treated in some memorable lines in "Basant" and "Anārkalī." But the trouble begins when the poet himself follows the same path.

The poet's answer to the negation of Love in "Main nahīṅ rehṇā tērē garāṅ" is renunciation. "Basant" and "Anārkalī" point out man's selfishness and insensitivity towards woman but do little more. The poet explains Anarkali's failure to keep Jehangir faithful to her:

> First, he was a male, and, on top of it, a king;
> How could you keep braided in your hair
> A man so vain of power?

In "Sipahī dā dil" (A Soldier's Heart) the response to evil is given a patriotic turn. The protagonist prepares to go and fight the invaders of his country. Not any real invaders -- for there is no reference to a specific enemy, just an imagined one -- to show the proverbial "bravery" of the Panjabi:

> In happiness our goddess is woman,
> In war the sword.

The issue is again one of acceptance or non-acceptance of love. Here its rejection is justified in the name of patriotism in an imaginary situation. The poet clearly romanticizes the rejection. The reason seems to be that, on the one hand, he is very sensitive to the beauty and worth of human existence, but on the other, has also experienced the incompleteness, evanescence, even the impossibility of human happiness. In an attempt to cope with the situation, he either dismisses the question quickly or tries to allay his pain by believing in a philosophical disenchantment with the world or transcending it by creating other higher motives. But then the desire to enjoy life asserts itself with a redoubled intensity and the poet has his ecstatic moments, at times quite fanciful, because of the need to obviate the experience of life's imperfection and ugliness. The conflict goes on, leaving in its wake moods of joy, wistfulness or suffering, and adjustment in the form of reconciliation with pain or transcendence of the desire for life.

As the poet begins to see the reasons for the evanescence of joy and beauty in the social, political and economic bases of human life, for some time, the opposition between fulfillment and negation becomes even more pronounced. The title poem of *Kasumbhṛā* describes the tension.

> Friends, I am worn out gathering saflower.
> I am worn.
> Others filled but a little box each,
> But I packed a basket huge.
> Treacherous the thorns of this *kasumbhṛā*
> Catching in my blouse, tore it.
> I am tired gathering *kasumbhṛā*

The opposite forces causing the tension and the tension so caused are etched clearly. The clarity appears to be the result of the new insight, the ability to attribute the difficulty of happiness in life to definite reasons, the inhuman nature of the economic-political reality. A definite explanation of ugliness also gives definition to the human desire for self-realization. A craving for love and beauty, an understanding that it cannot be satisfied, and a specific attitude towards this situation are the three dimensions of Mohan Singh's poetry from *Kasumbhṛā* to *Kach-sach*. All of it was published after Mohan Singh had been exposed to Progressive influences, although its moral and political implications are not always explicit in this poetry. In *Kasumbhṛā*, the rejection of beauty because it lacks a moral basis and is, therefore, not real, is quite a noticeable attitude, as in "Taj Mahal." The mood of most poems in *Adhvāte* is one of reconciliation, the poet settling for partial self-realization. "Adhā hanerē adhā svērē" (Half in Dark, Half in Light) is one of the many poems reflecting the compromise.

Let me live like a tree,
Half in dark, half in light;
All light also kills,
If all darkness annihilates life.

I know the earth carries nectar in one breast;
From the other poison flows.
Strange the thrills of this life,
Hell and heaven joined in one embrace.

As the moral concern for the suffering deepens, it arouses a new response to reality -- the readiness to strive, to change the circumstances so that the underpriviliged may come to their own. In *Kach-sach*, the dedication to the cause of the suffering is accompanied by a complete renunciation of personal fulfillment. The desire for the latter still wells up as it had continued to in the two previous volumes, but now the poet calls this desire a pursuit of "illusion," contrasted with the "truth" -- the cause of the masses:

Now, love, untie my wings;
I hear a beckoning call;
Now, to fly in open skies,
The craving of my heart!

On close examination the urge mentioned in "Khamb mērē hun khohl" (My Wings Now Untie) does not prove to be genuine. It amounts to little more than striking an attitude. Instead of facing reality, the poet is seeking a make-believe contact with it, an anodyne:

The draft of your love
No more gives me thrill;
In every limb, I crave
A bigger, bitterer draft.

Like the adoption of the new, altruistic goals, the renunciation of the personal is also unreal. Although the poet dubs the personal, private quest for beauty as "illusion," it keeps asserting itself again and again. His description of it as illusion, however, is quite accurate. The search for a new anodyne in the form of social involvement also betrays the drug-like quality of the enjoyment derived from involvement with individuals. This happens quite frequently, as for instance, in a *ghazal*:

This is a heart, no toy;
Why should it so helpless be;
Why should it, for a girl's pleasure,
Be estranged from all mankind.

One is at once reminded of the age-old Indian tradition of renouncing the bonds of human affection by minimizing their significance. Love between individuals is not devoid of significance. It is the poet's attitude towards reality, his failure to face and accept it, that has concealed its significance from him.

His private, personal life, its renunciation, and commitment to the cause of the working classes, are all unreal because he fails to be himself.

So far as the poet's estrangement from self is a result of the Progressive influence, it begins with a feeling of guilt towards the poor, the working class. For long it remains a feeling of guilt because all he is capable of is a gesture of involvement in their cause, as if he were conciliating the masses with this gesture. The falseness of the gesture begins to falsify his whole experience, mainly the meaning of his personal life. The poisoned personal life aggravates the guilt feeling and pushes the poet to bigger, more impressive gestures of altruism. The cycle goes on.

When the spell breaks, as it does begin to break in *Avāzāṅ* (Calls), it is because of the tremendous reserves of humanity buried under the poet's confusion and because he becomes actively engaged in the work of creating a new, essentially human, socio-economic order. Of course, initially, actual participation in political campaigns as a writer makes some of the poetry in *Avāzāṅ* even more directly propagandistic and didactic than any in *Kach-sach*. Poems like "Avāzāṅ," "Jatiāṅ dā gīt" (Song of the Peasant Women), "Ghol" (Contest), etc., adopt the workers' point of view and are written in their language and for their edification. But gradually the poet develops a point of view which is his own and from which he points to a world promising happiness as he knows it, but a happiness that will be shared by his companions, the workers, because it will be created by them. There is no contradiction between his personal aspirations and the concern for others because he is now able to keep his aspirations from falling into purely selfish channels such as gestures of renunciation or escape into orgiastic thrills. When genuine, his personal love does not have to be given up to make others' happiness possible. One is not a substitute for the other. The two merge together, as in this *ghazal:*

In the crucible of love
My anguish turned to flame;
By and by the grief of love
Became the people's grief.

Indications of this unity are there in Mohan Singh's earlier poetry. For example, in "Ishk nē kitnā kamīnā kar dittā" (How Mean Has Love Made Me!):

But not for this, my beauty,
Do I write and fight for Communism --
Because it will bring to all
Equality, Fraternity, Liberty!

Instead, I want Communism
Because, then, being free, you will become mine;
Otherwise what matters individual or collective strife.
How mean my love has made me!

But this feeling remained mostly suppressed until *Avāzāh*, where it begins to find a clear expression and grows stronger in the later writings, making Mohan Singh a poet of his own passion and the voice of an age. In "Mansoor" from the collection *Jandrē* (Locks) he says:

> If in your heart's ocean
> You again feel the surge of waves,
>
> Then picking up the robe of my love
> Which you have hung away,
> Throw it on the breast of storms,
> Calm your feelings
> And skim off the deluge.
>
> See how truth conquers,
> I am the Monsoor of this age.[81]

With a real contact with the self and the outside reality, there has appeared in Mohan Singh's poetry a new kind of awareness about the present imperfections of life. It contrasts with the negative reconciliation of *Adhvātē*, where the imperfections were seen as permanently fixed or the forced reconciliation gave way to fantisized perfections in much of his writing. Now the acceptance is positive and dynamic, sustained by the courage to face the present suffering and by the knowledge of a glorious future which is being created by present action:

> Only by action the tresses of time become comely
> Only action does endow the earth with beauty.

Only by accepting the joy and suffering of the present and by striving can any real improvement be made. This realism alone does fully express human life:

> Move on, for movement alone is another name for life;
> Stopping is death, movement is life infinite;
> Static, a drop becomes venom or at most a pearl.
> Drops, when they move, become a roaring river.
> "Amal" [Action], from *Vaddā vēlā*)

And

> This is a confrontation which brings all together in the work
> of creating a new world.
> When a million arms rise in one movement.
> When a million lips deliver one message,
> When in a million eyes hangs one dream
> The courtyard of life is filled with fragrance.
> ("Krāntī" [Revolution] from *Vaḍḍā vēlā*
> [Late Morning])

As a dialectical materialist, when he meets reality thus in the present moment, Mohan Singh finds himself in unison with all mankind.

Amrita Pritam effects the transition from the personal to the universal with less difficulty than Mohan Singh. She does not need to transcend her middle-class experience to achieve empathy with the suffering masses. The woman's situation within her own class gives her the full taste of centuries of human suppression. It is not surprising, therefore, that her writing clearly turned to social criticism much earlier than Mohan Singh's. This in spite of the fact that she did not become as steeped in ideology as Mohan Singh. She did not need the guidance of ideology to show the difference between right and wrong. In contrast with Mohan Singh, who in his development towards Progressivism, generally moves from a real or desired personal fulfillment to the quest for realization in countless unfulfilled lives, Amrita starts from the reality of her own unfulfilled life. Pursuing the meaning of life that dawns in her earliest love of poetry, she soon found herself face to face with the impossibility of achieving it in the conditions around her. Amrita's poetry from *Patthar gītē* (Pebble playthings) (1946) onwards is mainly an expression of this realization. Some of her most powerful poems are in *Patthar gītē*. The animus of these poems is rarely political or derived from an awareness of a class conflict in society. They are mainly an exposé of the middle-class psychology, though the inhuman quality of life characteristic of the middle-class existence also seems to pervade the entire society. The chief example of this inhumanity is the treatment of woman, but the callousness, of which the treatment of woman is only one manifestation, is the governing force in society. Though woman suffers more than man, man's life is as devoid of meaning as woman's. For the majority of men, woman's suffering represents their own, really and symbolically. But even the utter tyrants' life is also equally galled by their own tyranny. The sense of meaninglessness is all-engulfing:

> My eyes are mere pebble playthings,
> Pebble playthings anyone may play with.

Human relations are founded on lust:

> Beyond blood and flesh, nothing,
> An utter darkness, deaf and blind.

"Kire" (Worms) unveils the rotten core of human existence in this situation:

> Today on the heap of dead flesh
> A host of worms has gathered.
> When youth's liquid dwindles in life's bottle
> And lids crack,
> On some spilled white blood
> And on red blood,
> Worms gather.

The experience of meaninglessness, at times, acquires cosmic dimensions, as in "Cappa chan" (A Slice of the Moon):

A quarter moon and a handful of stars,
Have occupied my horizon.
My hungers vast!
But, benign Giver! Your bounties --
A handout of stars
With a slice of the moon thrown in --
Try my patience.

The poetess often attributes the loss of meaning in life to male selfishness. Man's abuse of woman has poisoned all human life, has dehumanized it. Woman is turned into a physical object; human life becomes completely devoid of love, as in "Lahū-miṭṭī" (Clay and Blood):

My deity!
I am merely blood and clay.
Bond of the souls,
A rainbow in the sky,
Has beautiful colors,
But I cannot swing.
I am merely blood and clay.

Amrita exposes male hypocrisy by which man's heartlessness towards woman is transformed into piety. "Kanyā dān" (Daughter-Donation) is a strong slap on the face of man's virtuousness in supporting arranged marriages:

Keep on giving charity, generous givers!
Keep on storing merit,
A bath in the Ganges.

Woman is coerced into cow-like docility in the name of holiness and its accompanying rewards. Amrita describes man's inverted view of his selfishness in "Gaū shālā" (Cow Shelter):

Sometimes, when a gentle cow's daughter,
In reaching youth,
Kicks now and then,
Putting a rope around her legs,
The fortunate cowherds
Get blessed with sons
And bathe in milk.

While blaming the male for the prevailing ugliness and suffering, as Amrita does, she does not become alienated from man. She deplores man's misdeeds without losing sympathy with him. The underlying motivation in her poetry is the desire to have man act humanely. Improvement in man's behavior, as it enhances woman's happiness, will equally enhance his own. Without his happiness, woman's cannot be reached either. Besides having this sympathy underlying her criticism of the male behavior, Amrita is also aware of the involuntary nature of the male behavior. Man sins against woman and humanity because of the force of social convention. Most men are the victims of convention, even as they are the instruments of its tyranny. In "Jī" (Yes, Sir!), Amrita says:

> Pangs arise,
> But suppressing them,
> Every tongue everywhere
> Says, "Yes, sir!"

"Bē avāz" (Voiceless) expresses the same universal suppression:

> How much is voiceless!
> Who knows
> The music of how many strings
> Remained untouched?
> Who knows
> How many aches
> Could not become articulate?

Caught in a destructive relationship with man, woman cannot reject man. Instead, she strives to establish a wholesome relationship with him, but the circumstances do not permit, as in "Tūṅ ik dēvtā" (You, a God):

> But I remained clay
> Strewn on the ways, leading to you,
> Lifting myself in your search
> Falling down in the same pursuit;
> Your unseen pull
> Would not let me rest.

"Main tainūṅ piār kītā" (I Loved You) points out the opposition between desire and the uncongenial nature of the present social reality in clear terms:

> My offering untouched,
> My hands not virgin;
> How can this sentence be
> Between you and me
> I -- love -- you?

Barriers against genuine human relations cause infinite anguish and are rarely surmounted:

> Only after rubbing and bruising
> My forehead
> On a hundred different stones
> Did I finally reach
> The threshold of my true deity.

In *Lammiāṅ vātān* (Long Journeys) (1949) Amrita sees more clearly than ever before that man negates his own happiness by acting wrongly due to the pressure of social convention. Convention is the force making the conditions of life inhuman:

> Thick is the texture of conventional dust;
> What else can I say?
> The magic web of dust fell on your love
> And it remained a stooge in custom's hands.
> ("Sanskār" [Patterns])

In a traditional society like India, the present convention carries behind it the weight of a long past. The petrifying effects of tradition are well symbolized by the inert statue of a god.

> You are an idol of stone
> Your feelings cold like frost.
> Having slept the sleep of aeons
> Your emotions still unthawed.
> ("Dēvtā" [Deity])

The breath of convention, sustained by ancient tradition, can snuff out the spark of spontaneity very easily.

> Centuries old, wrinkled wisdom
> Scowling at the brow, pledges
> To turn to dust
> The rosy hue of earth.
> ("Miṭṭī" [Clay])

During the years before India's independence, Amrita's social criticism stemmed mainly from her personal experience. It was a sensitive woman's assessment of the middle-class existence from the inside, and through it, that of the whole society. Unlike Mohan Singh, she did not have to use the Marxian ideology in her poetry to project clearly or to analyze the malaise of her situation. It seems that she hoped for improvement through changes in personal outlook, as if, in spite of the monumental pressures of tradition and convention, one could change his values and attitudes by mere volition. Though she noticed the continuity of tradition over the ages, she did not quite realize how strong the hold of tradition, or of the total socio-historical reality can be on the career of individuals as well as society. In this sense, her poetry harbored an incipient optimism about the future, though the optimism was overlaid with a dismal picture of the present. But she was rudely shaken by the events and developments accompanying India's independence. For Amrita's expectations from independence were also born of the same optimism that underlay her social criticism in poetry. She had expected independence to be the start of a glorious new era. But the rank disorder and bloodshed caused by the country's partition hardly gave Indians a chance to be elated over their independence. Then, the confrontation with the gigantic task of creating a viable standard of living for all Indians compounded the depression caused by the bestiality of the communal massacres. Like many other writers, Amrita saw the relative superficiality of the event of independence as compared to the deeper historical forces governing society. In *Lammiāṅ vātān*, while she grieved poignantly over the tragedy of the riots, she also insinuated that it had been caused by a capitalistic conspiracy. Real freedom will be possible only after capitalism has been overthrown. Earlier too she had noticed the importance of the economic factor in human relations very clearly:

> How can I speak?
> Before I even move my lips
> Your bread blurts out.
> I did have a few words to say,
> But we are creatures of the grain,
> So my voice is buried under the weight
> Of the bread you provide.
> ("Ann-dātā" [Bread Giver] from *Patthar gītē*)

She had seen the prostitution of life caused by a property-oriented psychology:

> In one bazaar, making a little din
> With song and music
> Paying off their Deity
> To have his seal on the deal
> They become entitled
> To do business in broad daylight.
> ("Veopār" [Traffic] from *Patthar gītē*)

But this was a general expression of anger at the manipulation of human beings and excessive possessiveness in human relations in a manner similar to the transactions in goods. It did not include a clear awareness about the economic structure and its relation to historical movement. In *Lammiāṅ vātān*, Amrita's general revulsion with the commericialization of human life found an ideological basis in Marxism. She had had affinity with Progressivism before; now she became one of its major voices. Going beyond her middle-class experience, she addressed herself to the entire society, with particular concern for the "people," because she now knew that real change has its roots in the depth of the entire social reality and the most important segment of this reality is the working class. Their salvation means the salvation of society. She takes guidance from ideology to understand the social process and to project it in her poetry. In *Lammiāṅ vātān*, *Sarghī vēlā* (Morning) (1952), *Sunēhurē* (Messages) (1955) and *Kastūrī* (Musk) (1959), she views society from a Marxian, historical perspective, trying to capture the present unhappiness of mankind, giving exhortation for struggle and pointing towards the inevitable rosy future with confidence, at times even experiencing its arrival. In "Twārīkh" (History), for instance, she traces the causes of the gory events of 1947, describes the present control of capitalism over society with all its evils, and rejoices over the imminent triumph of the people:

I am India's history -- close my pages past;
May it live for eons -- the page I write at last.
Today the morning sees the face of dawning ages;
May mankind live again! And may again live man!

In "Sunehurē", she dedicates her pen to the creation of a new order and to giving intimations of its approach. The poem celebrates a new awakening:

A leaf is plucked from a bough,
From every wood rise angry cries . . .

From waters and deserts, in one voice all,
Countless Sassis and Sohnis (heronines of Panjabi romances) speak;
My voice is not my voice alone
In every voice a destiny speaks.

As a result of her commitment to a particular ideology, it is inevitable that a certain amount of sentimentality should enter Amrita's poetry. There are times when her professed sympathy with the people does not ring true and her optimism about the future seems forced or wishful. But this does not happen as often as one might expect. As mentioned earlier, the main reason for this is her ability to emphathize with the underdog because of her own experience of a disadvantaged position, as a woman. But there is also another reason of her success. Her commitment to ideology is not thorough. She applies it in her poetry in very broad terms, without trying to go into specifics as Mohan Singh often does. This limits the power and appeal of her poetry, but within its limits, her poetry remains genuine. It does not falsify emotion or contradict it. Staying on a general ground, she remains fairly close to her own experience, and since there is an underlying similarity between her deprivation and that of the people whose experience she wants to share, she can meet them on this general ground.

As the transition from the personal to the universal in Amrita's poetry is smooth, she is not faced with the Mohan Singh-like predicament of having to choose between the personal and the universal meaning. At times she might appear to resemble Mohan Singh in his renunciation of the personal, as in "Bēniāz" (Selfless):

In this smoldering air
There is no room
For sandal-smelling breaths to meet.
Some other time!
If winds alone determine the boat's direction,
By the blood-drenched leaves of human history,
For the present, my love is above desire.

But on close reflection, one finds that Amrita's attitude is not at all renunciatory. It is realistic. There are no alternatives. Personal love cannot be fulfilled at present. The poet accepts the sad fact of life, but does not abandon hope for the future. She does not sacrifice her love. It has been sacrified by history. Only by accepting the truth of history and by striving can one change the direction of history. It is also a mark of

Amrita's realism that love in her poetry is characterized by tenderness and sublimity, instead of the intoxicating quality it has in much of Mohan Singh's poetry. Her faithfulness to the personal experience has always been the mainstay of Amrita's poetry. Perhaps this is the reason why she did not remain tied to an ideology and in her recent poetry has adopted a strictly individualistic approach to life, hoping thereby to give a most truthful, and perhaps most useful, representation of it. Thus Amrita's poetry entered Progressivism somewhat naturally and made an equally natural exit from it.

During the years before independence and perhaps also since then, the poet who responded most vehemently to the uncongenial conditions of life was Bawa Balwant. His *Mahānāc* (The Great Dance) was published in 1941. *Bandargāh* (Harbor), published in 1951, actually also belongs to the early 1940s. In the poems of these two volumes, like Amrita, he has a clearer affiliation with the social cause than the early Mohan Singh. However, in contrast to Amrita, the social critic of *Patthar gītē*, Bawa Balwant takes a definite ideological position from the very start. He is a poet of Socialism, about which he says in a poem entitled "Smājvād" (Socialism):

> Great were the efforts to extinguish me,
> To trample and suppress under ruthless feet
> My new-born, tender shoots of hope. . . .
> Before my birth an astrologer kept predicting:
> "By his hand shall the 'Great Queen' fall!"
> . . . .
> Those who had set out to crush me were themselves crushed;
> Those who have risen to kill me shall themselves perish.
> (from *Bandargāh*)

His commitment to Socialism is the result of deep insight into the socio-historical progress, yet it is not a cold, calculated decision. It is an elemental passion, as stated in the following poem entitled "Bāghī" (Rebel):

> A rebel am I, a rebel am I!
> An undying power forever am I!
> I am the founder of all sedition,
> The motion, the vigor and youth's awaking,
> Of mercury my heart, the mind of the waves,
> A shaker of mountains, the sound of my roar.
> Before me nothing, the gang of oppressors,
> The fang of my fire, unquenchable flame!
> These sights so dim, decaying, and old
> The moon that is pallid, the lusterless stars,
> I'll change every rule of the sun that is old
> And bring into being a new day, new night,
> Rip open the flesh of the breast of the sky
> And show unto life the way into life.
> The body of change, of change the singer,
> A rebel am I, a rebel am I!
> (from *Mahānāc*)

The poet's understanding of and response to life seem to be rooted in a perception of its cosmic dimensions which give his experience a visionary quality, lift it above the realm of mere deliberation. Faced with obstructions to his nature, he taps the deepest springs of his being and finds there a limitless strength. That is why, though he is always aware of the presence of oppression in life, the dominant note of his poetry is one of triumph. At the same time as he sings of a new order, he is also a singer of the Self. In fact, Self is the beginning and the end of his quest:

> What avails the quest if it prevail over the head?
> What avails the quest if the sky overspread the sight?
> What though the dream of my life did not arrive,
> Our anguished love is no mere camphor.
> These are all signs of him who is sought;
> Play vigorously midst the crowds, my life!
> ("Melā" [Fair] from *Bandargāh*)

The Self is the source of all meaning. The essence of slavery is dependence on anything extraneous to the Self:

> Worse than sin is, in bondage, even immortal life
> For in the prison-light, to bestial turns divine.
> O Death, put out the light of the lamp that is not my own.
> ("Sitāre" [Stars] from *Mahānāc*)

The Self is neither an intellectual abstraction, nor a merely spiritual entity:

> The philosophy of life
> Rings in every vein of mine,
> Why shouldn't I sing, "Life! Just Life?"
> ("Zindgī hī zindgī" [Life Everywhere]
> from *Mahānāc*)

The center of existence is the earth:

> O Earth, the giver of form to all essence,
> Your expanse even to the ocean's floor,
> Your extent to the light of stars,
> Heaven too must rest on earthy ground;
> The earth too has countless forms.
> I bow to you, O Earth!
> ("Dhartī māta" [Mother Earth] from
> *Bandargāh*)

The divine in man is not a distant super-terrestrial reality; it is here and now. Its character is not detachment and serenity, but a ceaseless struggle waged with confidence, but in the full awareness of the harshness of reality:

> "Why does the world seek salvation in cold sand?
> From what demon does it seek the divine spark?
> You should see in every wave the great secret of the waves

And fly at times into the starry realms;
On one drop of your blood are many marvelous worlds;
In the light of your eyes is the life of the world's garden."
Said the sailor.
"Cremate not your life in the lap of grief!
Not for your tongue the songs like fragile butterfly wings,
Not for your world the hearts of the soft glowworms,
Not for your rest the lap of jasmine blossoms!
Your own light alone for the night of your delusion!
The Himalayas' peaks the seat of your worship!"
("Jahāzrān" [Sailor] from *Bandargāh*)

The awareness of his own power and an all-pervasive quality of life dawn on man through the feeling of love. Love is, in fact, the form of this awareness. In order to exist, love need not be free from impediment, nor does it accept the necessity of any obstacles for its birth and growth. It is by nature free and ensures man's freedom. Awakened to his manhood by love, man must prevail:

I continued to love her.
I daily died, was everyday revived.
Though my Usha was in scorn unmoved,
My love lived on.

Reason said, "This is no love.
If it be not in her heart, 'tis nothing.
This labor of yours is fruitless;
Without effect, your action nothing.
What mockery is it that you kill yourself
And fill the cup of life with pain?"
But I held my heart before her darts;
I persisted in my love of her.

Love sees itself in everyone,
Every sin to piety it can change,
Grief calmly bears the slings of hate,
Love does not crave for consequence in fruit.

O love! Your touch upon me
Made life a world of light.
By your touch alone there is the soul in every song
And every lover's love my heart contains.

O love! Your touch alone will one day make
Man perfect man.
So I persevered in bearing scorn
I continued to love her.
("Mohabbat" [Love] from *Bandargāh*)

When man realizes his full potential, he will also create the human conditions of life. Man rising to his nature and action is the content and goal of Bawa's poetry:

> If it rouse not the heart again,
> What kind of heart's voice it is?
> If it be not life,
> What avails this instrument of poetry, art?
> ("Kavitā" [Poetry] from *Bandargāh*)

Bawa's poetry is thus at once a call to and an example of humanity:

> It is life, not someone else's wealth;
> No sin it is to drink the draft of life.
> Why fetters for the mind
> When there are none for air, or time?
> A wound, an ardor, and a restless search,
> Without anguish, it is death, not life.
> Through your lane do I daily pass
> Though fate allows me not to see your face.
>
> The burden of mankind, and all its ills to end
> If not for that, what use the head, the neck?
> ("Navīn ghazal" [New Ghazal] from
> *Bandargāh*)

Perhaps because of its emotional emphasis on the personal, Amrita and Mohan Singh's poetry does not seem to have the same intensity in its social import as Bawa Balwant's. Yet it is they, rather than Bawa Balwant, who became the leading influence in Progressive Panjabi writing. The explanation for this lies in the nature of the political orientation of our time. We seek to solve our socio-political problems externally, by changes in the framework of the political machinery. The organization of factors outside the individual, including the power of the people as a body, are the means of bringing about a better order. In Bawa, these elements are important but their organization follows from an inner change in the individual. His ideal, besides lacking an affinity with the contemporary attitudes, is also fundamentally, more exacting. So the representative poets of the period 1935-55 are Amrita and Mohan Singh.

The trend dominant in the poetry of these years and mainly associated with Amrita and Mohan Singh is often described as romantic *pragatīvād* (Progressivism). It is romantic because its central subject is love in reality or as a metaphor. The working class is highly idealized and the picture of its, and hence mankind's, future is painted in rosy colors. All this clearly suggests a departure from realism. The problem here is not simply one of a lack of verisimilitude in representing life. It stems from the poet's commitment to a projection of the "peoples'" aspirations and hopes. These hopes and aspirations can be authentic, and in that sense real, only if they are part of the poets' own experience. Amrita and Mohan Singh's Progressive ardor remains substantially authentic in this sense because it has its origin in deep personal experience. The personal then expands into the universal and saves it from lapsing into unreality. But many writers, in following their example, began where their models had arrived after a long process of evolution. Now commitment to the universal cause was a popular stance. Treatment of the universal (people's) experience was the only "proper" subject of poetry. But most new writers did not have any deep personal experience through which to link themselves with the universal, so they simply assumed the now fashinable view of the mass experience as real and also as their own. They started at the wrong end of experience, trying to go from the universal to the personal. With a borrowed view of reality, they also borrowed the modes in which it was expressed. Actually, for want of contact with reality, they clung all the more tenaciously to these forms to create a semblance of reality. *Pragtīvādī* style, its imagery, metaphors and allusions, became increasingly hackneyed. The "night" of the present and the "dawn" of future became the sole preoccupation of poetry. When it was not direct propaganda, it was worse, mere verbal gymnastics. A few poets, such as Piara Singh Sehrai, Ishwar Chitrakar, Santokh Singh Dhir, and Gurcharan Rampuri, did at times, write fairly genuine poetry, but for the rest Panjabi poetry had entered a blind alley.

Towards the late fifties, some younger poets began to rebel against the stifling hold of *pragatīvād* on Panjabi literature. Their reaction crystallized in the form of Experimentalism. The initial impulse behind Experimentalism was innovation for its own sake. But the hold of social purpose on Panjabi literature was so strong that even Experimentalism could not break away from it. From the start, it never openly refuted the possibility that literature may serve social and moral ends. Adverse criticism of their writing, coming mainly from the Marxist critics, further inclined them toward accepting the legitimacy of the social use of literature. So much so that some of them, e.g., the leading Experimentalist, Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, began to claim that their writing was a more correct application of Marxism than the Progressives'. The result was a compromise in the form of a new trend, Modernism, implying a confrontation with the contemporary reality and its honest, accurate representation. Literature was freed from the grip of ideology without becoming divorced from a concern with the current scene, a concern that, at the present juncture, is bound to be social, economic, and political. Some Experimentalists like Hasrat and Misha were converts from Progressivism and after the initial enthusiasm of conversion, they assumed a social involvement that has begun to be an important element in their poetry. Others like Ahluwalia and Ravinder Ravi have developed social sympathies progressively. Still other poets arrived at Modernism without becoming Experimentalists, although the pressure of Experimentalism appears to have been a factor in their development in this direction. The poet Jagtar, for example, moved to Modernism directly from Progressivism. His Progressive poetry was often of unusual power, as in "From the Prison Cell":

> Through the chinks of the closed door
> He saw: in the courtyard
> Many colored flowers laughed
> In the sun, scattering fragrance.
> Their scent, like wind and revolution,
> Shall not grow faint or die -- never!
> He understood, and instantaneously,
> His face lit up with joy.

On the other wall, he wrote again:
My eyes, brain, lips will never sever
Their bond with the world.

At night,
Entering through the slits in the door,
Moonlight walks with me fearlessly;
At daybreak,
Undaunted by the watchman's gun
Or the clatter of his hobnailed boot,
The singing of the unseen bird
Announced:
Night is over.[82]

Jagtar's Modernism is an attempt to shed any remnants of romanticism or abstraction there might be in his Progressive poetry. It is inspired by an even deeper humanism than his earlier poetry:

I have not the remotest link, now,
With disconnected men resembling scattered instants.
Coming out of space,
I have landed squarely on the earth.
"Adhūrā ādmī" [Half Man] from *Adhūrā ādmī* [1967])

Another eminent poet who has arrived at Modernism with its criticism of the current situation is Haribhajan. He had started out as an esthete but eventually discovered that to achieve the personal meaning one must pass through the public, social reality and face its uncongeniality, in other words, criticize it:

On the page of the road
I have written a letter to you
And hung it on the lamp post
So you may read it.
"Sarak dē safē uttē" (On the Road's Page), *Sarak dē Safē tē* (1970).

Many younger poets, Sati Kumar, Ravinder Ravi, Joga Singh and Tara Singh, display a similarly critical attitude towards the contemporary situation.

In the late sixties there arose a whole new galaxy of far more ardent champions of the social cause who found these somewhat noncommittal observations as wanting in integrity and responsibility. They likewise dismissed most of the Progressive writing of their predecessors as contrived and dishonest because, they felt, it was devoid of real involvement with the masses. To them literature of social criticism was meaningless unless it was accompanied by, or rather stemmed from active and violent political action. Their zeal yielded a combined crop of terrorism and poetry literally written in blood. Allied with the so-called Naxalite, or Maoist, movement, these poets have suffered incarceration and persecution which has involved extreme physical and mental torture, and even execution. Here, one may say, is Progressive poetry with a vengeance, an articulation in word and deed of Mao's maxim that poetry flows powerfully from the barrel of the gun:

> [The Naxalbari [Naxalite] movement, while it has drawn a clear dividing line in the political arena, has also strongly counteracted the bourgeois degradation in all the spheres of our life. In the cultural sphere, the masked literary priests who had remained in the seats of honor for long have now been completely exposed. To participate in the greatest discovery of the twentieth-century man, the brave warriors are plunging into the battle with pen and gun, and this action will continue until final victory.][83]

Here are a few samples of Naxalite poetry. In "Shām dā rang" (Color of Evening), Lal Singh Dil, describes the homelessness and dejection of the countless masses and sees the beginning of the end of their suffering in the glow of revolution:

> The color of the evening is old again.
> There are footpaths going to the hamlets;
> A lake is walking away from an office
> After being fired;
> The lake is drinking a burning thirst;
> Some of the city has begun to walk to the villages.
> One is leaving all his earnings behind;
> Another is wiping with his *dhotī*, the blood
> Drawn by the goad from the bodies of his weak bullocks;
> The color of the evening is old again.
> . . . .
> A long caravan is on the move.
> Everywhere
> Are the Naxalbaris and the peasants on the move,
> Carrying a load of spears on their shoulders
> Along the jungle paths;
> The loves of the fields were murdered yesterday;
> A tall fire leapt from the huts yesterday;
> On the move is a long caravan.[84]

"Lāl pūrab" (Red East) treats the same theme in the same pattern, but in more specific terms. The poem sees the rise of revolutionary consciousness like the rising sun which brings a singing message:

> "O, the straw-picking people,
> Pick thoughts!"
> It gives the message,
> "O, the waking ones of the huts,
> Revolution will come from the huts!"
> "O, those who keep awake in the fields,
> Revolution is born in the fields!"

"O, those who watch the morning from the mills,
Revolution awakes from the mills!"
"O, those rotting on the edges of sewage drains!
Revolution comes out of the barrels of guns!"
The red ball of the sun
Became bigger, rose higher.
O, the proud dollar!
O, the foolish ruble!
The sun will not be covered;
The red ball of the sun
Became bigger, rose higher.

"Rihāī dī khushī'c gīt" (Song Celebrating Freedom from Jail) again expresses the poet's love and compassion for the poor and his confidence in their power and future:

Whoever stops drinking blood by himself?
The people know the whole scheme today.
The hills are lava cold
The people boiling lava.
Not indebted to anyone for a farthing,
The people can take care of a whole age.

"Vishvās" (Confidence) is a more elaborate declaration of the same faith. The faith is inspired by the past records of the brave Panjabis' fight for truth and justice. Such historical inspiration is quite typical of Naxalite poetry. The most inspiring historical figure is Guru Gobind Singh, who created the *Khālsā*, the soldier-saint. The past exploits of the great Panjabis are seen as the early steps in the Progressive liberation of mankind as expounded in Marxism-Maoism:

As in the earth, there is everything --
Wheat, sugar, iron and ammunition;
There is everything in people,
Waves, floods, storms
Dignity, honor and revolution.

Yesterday, the comrade with the Christ-like face,
Raising high the calls of waves and storms,
Was caught in chains;
The history of men boiled, roasted and sawed
Was repeated.

After being broken limb by limb
His heart was still steadfast like Lenin.

Hot blood boiled with vengeance;
Carrying rounds like coutless little mangoes,
Careless of their heads, the guerillas marched
Over the paths through mango trees.

> Bullets were immersed in the bellies
> That had always sucked blood;
> Hot rounds were shot through the hands
> That had crucified the Christ-like comrade upside down.

Dil has also expressed his revolutionary fervor in the form of *ghazal*. The gentle irony of the traditional *ghazal* style highlights by contrast the poet's ruthless courage:

> Not for nothing do the stars shine of nights;
> Many are the hearts that people have hung in this hair.
> Our courage too will draw attention in the marketplace
> In your town, I hear, there is a price on heads.
> He comes and sits in them, even before I close my eyes,
> In affectionate anger, I have tried hard to close my eyes to the sun.
> What if in my ears still pours the molten lead
> In the ears of dawn, there are the rings of light.
> Even the smell of our corpse will leave the earth
> For only, washed in blood, can its particles shine.

The dominant note in Pash's poetry is one of a trenchant criticism of the slavish mentality of the middle class, its divorce from reality, its ability to evade reality to conceal indignities and self-humiliation. Truth requires courage and suffering. Pash addresses the bourgeois intellectual in "Sac dē arth" (The Meaning of Truth):

> Your agreeing or not agreeing
> Makes no difference to truth.
> The truth of these hurting limbs has lived a life,
> And every truth having lived its life
> Becomes an age.
> And now this truth is present not only in fields and factories
> But it also pervades the army lines.

Like truth, true poetry is nothing but contact with reality. The poor peasant has this contact, his life is the people's poetry:

> The poetry of bare feet
> Has been written in mud
> By anonymous poets,
> Who remembered the name of the month
> From the itching soreness between the toes
> Caused by working in the rain.
> ("Barsāt" [Rain])

"Jinhāñ nē bēdāvā nahīñ likhiā" (Those Who Did Not Sever Relations) exposes the emptiness of the religious professions of the bourgeois Sikhs who have sold out and are like those followers of Guru Gobind Singh who at one time had deserted him. But unlike those deserting warriors, who later repented and rejoining the

Guru, died fighting, the present hidden deserters never repent:

In the intoxication of celebrating your memory
They have disowned you.
Machivārā
Has grown on their faces
And everyday, lice write *Zafarnāmahs* there.

The satanic soul of the English
Has come to dwell in the Ashoka wheel on the top of the Red Fort
And they, in front of the common alliance
Have sworn allegiance to Delhi.

They have declared all the "sparrows" in the country
To be public criminals.
But, my Guru, who are the Sikhs that have not deserted you?
And even now every jail and interrogation center
Is to them the wall of Sarhand or the Anandpar Fort.
Diving in the inundated Sirsa
They have gone to salvage your books.[85]

"Kātal (A Murderer) challenges the self-respect of the intellectuals and professionals:

When do I deny I am not murderer?
I murder those who murder mankind,
Kill justice
Smother truth.
Look, you engineers, doctors, teachers,
Look at your bruised knees
Which have been bruised kneeling
On some "white" or "blue" thresholds!

People have not become men yet; they are only "docile cattle." Even the politicians' antics are like the barking of dogs. They should know that

Here the law is of lead
Which fire alone can melt, not the dogs' barking.

Somewhat in contrast with the general tendency to expose the bourgois hypocrisy and cowardice or to challenge the power of a tyranical social-political system, the pecularity of Darshan Khatkar's poetry seems to be the experience of an awakening among the oppressed and the surge of an irressitible power accompanying the awakening. "Sangī-sāthī" (Bosom Companions) overflows with the feeling of oneness between the present revolutionaries going through the ordeal of barbarous persecution at the hands of authority and those who have suffered similarly at other times and places. The final feeling is one of invincibility and imminent triumph:

In one corner
In winter, Bhagat, lying on ice, smiles . . .
There
The son of Turkey, Nazim Hikmet, comes and sits.

Smiling at this pitch dark night,
Faiz recites his verse
"A few days more, my love,
Just a few days more!"

"Dhanvād dā pal" (The Moment of Gratitude) is a description of the prison-like life the poor peasants lead and being actually imprisoned for sedition brings out, by contrast, the peculiar nature of this century-old confinement. The poet is glad to see the awakening fostered by persecution. "Sidk dī gal" (A Matter of Perseverence) is also about the spurring effects of persecution:

To weep over the extinguished, or to light more lamps
To decide on this is the matter of the present moment.

Haribhajan Halvarvi is relatively more intellectual. He also shows greater concern for form. But he never forgets that action is the real test of truth. This realization is the theme of "Jamman vālē shabad" (The Words Being Born):

In the fire of action.
The false words and meanings will perish
The particle of truth will shine brighter.

Action involves suffering and extreme torment. But it is the ordeal of torment that produces a hero in every age. "Yug-nāik" (The Hero of the Age) seeks such a person.

Other noteworthy Naxalite poets are Amarjit Chandan, Gurdip Grewal, Jujhar Singh, Sujata Sandhu. The most conspicuous trait in Chandan's temperament is the exceptional clarity with which he sees the necessity of violent aggression as a means of social change. Grewal and Jhujar Singh may appear prosaic, but it is because of the revolutionary assumptions come so naturally to them that they give the impression of taking the finality of revolution for granted. Sandhu's poetry reflects an anlytical temperament and interest in specifics which qualities give originality to her message. It is difficult to say at this point which of the Naxalite poets will grow to be major Panjabi poets. Their impact on Panjabi literature is already noticeable in its renewed social concern.

In criticism, Sekhon has been the leading influence throughout the post-independence years. However, a few other Marxist critics stand out for their originality and substantial contribution to Panjabi literature. Most conspicuous among them is Kishan Singh. Besides *Sāhit dē somē* (The Sources of Literature) (1967) and *Yathārathvād* (Realism), he has written numerous articles enunciating and applying his theory of literature. Fundamentally, his views are similar to Sekhon's, but he elaborates them in a manner that makes Sekhon's exposition of the literary process, in comparison with his, appear like a jumble of vague generalizations. He traces the social genesis of literature and describes its social function in clear, specific terms. Starting his argument with an observation of the very biological need of every organism to survive, he points out the unique -- that is the social -- mode in which man, among all animals, has learned to cope with nature:

> Except for man, every other creature is dependent on the mercy of nature; but the social organization of his life and the need for producing the food he eats have freed man from this dependence. The grip of this net on the race has transformed the manner of the human struggle for life. For its needs, the changed form has created in man and in the society around him the necessary tools and means which no other creature possesses and which are the secret of man's progress.
>
> The human production of food is social. It is not only social, at any time, it is made possible through an economic system. The human struggle for survival is the form of social production of the moment. . . . Involved in human struggle are three parties: man, the mode of production, that is society, and nature. The most important of these is the mode of production, or society. Within the limitations of [man's] biological constitution, the human struggle is social. Its needs subordinate the others -- nature and man -- to themselves. The mode of struggle always produces its tools and means. So the social mode of man's struggle has created the tools it requires. First, man can change nature according to the needs of this mode; secondly, he shapes himself according to the possibilities in nature. Both changes, in nature and in man, are social. The ability to change nature and himself socially is the power that man has in his hands. His life depends on this very power. This change alone is his interest.[86]

While nature is controlled according to human need by a socio-economic system and technology, and by Progressive changes in them, man also must be controlled to serve the purposes of production:

> Whatever its form, production is made possible by man's power. Man's biological instincts cannot be harnessed to society. These too are molded into a need by the third factor accompanying nature and man, the mode of production, social relations. Man's biological instincts mold themselves into the cast of that manifest feeling, mental and emotional attitude, and ideology with which human power can turn the grindstone of the mode of production. The social change in human instincts, the power to transform them into feeling, is the outcome of the mode of struggle, that is society, the form of production and it parallels the possibilities in nature, inventions, etc. As society is man's progeniter, his equal in age, the evolution of man as man, the construction of human life, is tied with the social change of man. In other words, human life is lived not on the level of instincts, but on that of feeling. The source of human strength, its biological form, are no doubt instincts, but its manifestation in social life is accomplished through feeling. To be able to mold feeling according to one's needs is to use human power for his purpose.[87]

Thus the social organization of life enables man to control nature as well as himself to make the conditions of life congenial. Kishan Singh thinks that there is no end to the improvement of these conditions. Yet such improvement is not possible, at any time, anywhere or by any means, freely. Its manner and pace are strictly determined by the nature of the current social reality:

> Man can create, but only that which is possible for the third factor accompanying nature and man, the mode of social production. From a practical standpoint, a desire divorced from the context of the mode of production, is like building castles in the air. It is true that socially, the practical desire arises only when the possibility of its fulfillment through the mode of production has come into being. Man's need and wisdom lie in separating these two kinds of desire and to follow the latter of the two. The meaning of following this is to discover, so far as the situation permits, the means of changing the modes of production, to increase production by inventions made by improvement in knowledge about nature. The increased production means human security and progress. Therefore, the means like the knowledge of nature, etc. are man's truth.[88]

Running parallel to man's control of nature through knowledge is his control of himself, through art. Like science, art also helps man to advance:

> Within the limitations of man's biological constitution, the molding of instinct into particular patterns of feeling is a qualitative change in human constitution; it is the evolution of a new structure, new man. The birth of new man, new purpose is the emergence of new paths of human capability. Like invention, feeling is a social creation. . . . The subordination of instinctual power to need in the form of feeling means success in struggle. Therefore, parallel to invention, feeling is man's truth. This is what is sought by art, poetry, culture. This is the faith of the poet, the artist, his search, his responsibility. Just as the law of nature and technology are the scientist's truth, feeling and culture are the artist's. In other words, feeling expressed in any medium is art, poetry, literature; and in literature the truth is of feeling, not of scientific essence. Or it may be said that the content of literature is not in the form of scientific truth, the meaning of nature, but in human form. For man, the all-embracing truth regarding this party in the struggle, that is man -- including beauty, ethics, social relations, personality, ideology, freedom -- is feeling.[89]

Though the expression and control of feeling is of the essence of art, it is not devoid of intellectual clarity. Intellectual grasp of reality and the appropriate emotional response to it must go hand in hand to produce art that fosters progressive change:

> Just as the scientist discovers the truths of eternal reality, the artist is the vendor of the sprouting social values, the guardian of aspirations, the ruler of hearts, the dealer of feelings and a devotee of realistic imagination. But this does not mean that he is incapable of seeing and thinking or mentally slack. He is an expert judge of human purpose and character, the diviner of life's movement. He notices the pulse of life so accurately that many times he lays down the course of development and direction and the outline of its movement for a whole century. . . . This is no miracle; it is the work of realistic imagination. To accept the existence of realistic imagination is to accept the impact of the power of the mind and heart. The reach of fine feeling and sharp intellect combined with possibility is what constitutes realistic imagination. Since it underlines values, changes possibility into reality, it is a great, constructive ethical force. The only people who are surprised by it are those who do not accept any mode of perception other than intellectual analysis.[90]

Thus characteristic element in art is still the feelings. Mental perception alone cannot produce art. "Mere expression of ideas, theory and philosophy, no matter how scientific does not become literature."[91]

Kishan Singh has criticized much of the contemporary and earlier Panjabi literature with these criteria in mind. He is generally highly impressed by the genuinness, therefore the Progressive quality, of most pre-modern writing and finds the contemporary Panjabi writing, particularly the Progressive writing, lacking in emotional realism and derived from purely mental machinations. This deficiency in writing he attributes to the writer's want or disregard of his experience of his subject. It is important to note here that proceeding from basically similar assumptions about the literary process, Kishan Singh and Sekhon differ considerably in their verdict on the authenticity of experience in the works of most writers. Their main, almost exclusive, concurrence is in a favorable opinion of the Sikh scriptures. For the rest, generally, Sekhon finds the experience of reality reflected in premodern literature as much less authentic than in the modern and Kishan Singh holds the opposite view:

> The shallowness of contemporary Panjabi literature is not due to political tyranny, but to the weakness of its literary quality. Political slogans are invoked because most writers have neither an access to the spirit of life, nor sympathy with it, nor honesty about it. . . . So there are cheap, common, seasonal, saleable things published and passed as literature.
>
> The Panjabi novelists, while they possess no experience of life, have piles of bags filled with T.B. and asthma. Temper a character, use sentimentality, extract the innocent reader's tears, the novel is successful.[92]

Kishan Singh's entry into the world of Panjabi criticism had an electric effect on Panjabi writing. On the whole, it has been a wholesome effect. He has been instrumental in bringing home to the writers the importance of intellectual and emotional unity and honesty in the portrayal of experience. But carried to an extreme, as is too frequently the case in Kishan Singh's criticism, the insistence on the difficulty a writer encounters in capturing his emotional experience or in overcoming his long-established response to life to form a new, wholesome one consciously, gives Kishan Singh's views on literature a deterministic quality which contradicts his very idea of Progressive literature. Literature becomes primarily the product of the historical movement, its own role in fostering Progressive literature is only the inevitable outcome of the historical process. If no man can deliberately participate in Progressive creation, unless the participation is already there as an inevitable consequence of one's place in the socio-historical process, one wonders why there should be so much fuss over the need for encouraging Progressive writing. It will come when it must. Sekhon allows for much greater freedom of action to the writer than Kishan Singh. Of the two, Sekhon also recognizes better the complexity of human nature and of literature. Kishan Singh gives the impression of subordinating literature to man's pursuit of materialistic needs for his physical survival. He does not seem to put enough stress on the subtle aspects and needs of human nature and their bearing on literature.

Somewhat ironically, the rigorous application of the Marxian ideology in Kishan Singh's criticism proved to be the chief factor in putting an end to Progressivism as a distinct movement in Panjabi literature. His exposure of the contradictions between the intellectual and emotional attitudes of most Progressive writers created a gap in the credibility of their work. Further, his own strong bias towards determinism and materialism led to a estrangement with the ideology that caused it. Besides engendering a reaction against a strictly ideological approach to literature, Kishan Singh also provided a positive basis for this reaction. His insistence on the close connection between literature and the socio-historical reality at the time of its creation provided the critics departing from Progressivism with the cardinal feature of their new rationale.

The latest trend in Panjabi writing is the concern for Modernity. It was ushered in by the Experimental reaction against Progressivism. Experimentalism was partly a search for innovation and variety to offset the monotony of Progressivism, but it was also inspired by the need to re-establish contact with reality from which Progressive modes of expression, having become too conventional and rigid, had become divorced. The latter inspiration developed into the concern for Modernity, for the concern in this trend is not for modernity in general, but for contemporaneity, the reality of the present time and place.

The most mature critic representing this trend is Attar Singh. He did not arrive at his present position by way of Experimentalism, but directly from Marxism. Like Kishan Singh, he emphasizes the necessity of intellectual and emotional unity in art, as, for example, in his incisive essay on Sekhon's *Kalākār*. Derived as his criterion of good art is from his application of

Marxism to literature, he does not consider it necessary to be bound by an ideology. The essential elements in good art are fidelity to experience and a full awareness of it. The writer's primary concern is to incorporate these elements into literature. The political and ideological implications will follow; they are part of the reality captured by the writer. In other words, the writer's primary concern is literature, not ideology. The writer's response to reality, if honest, is bound to be humanistic. It will no doubt be colored by the concern for human life and survival at the rudimentary level, but it will reflect much more strongly those finer aspects of the human reality which endow it with unusual significance. In communicating the deeper significance of life in literature, the functions of form and content are inseparable. The quest for human meaning in life and of the apt form of its expression combine in one to make the pursuit of beauty the appropriate purpose of literature for Attar Singh. No ivory tower esthete he, but an esthete nonetheless.

The Progressive Movement in Panjabi petered out by the late fifties and early sixties, but its social concern and a preoccupation with the historical context of the current reality still remain the guiding principles in the literary rationale of most writers today. Modernism is actually an extension of the relatively liberal application of Marxism found in Sekhon, particularly in his fiction. It is not surprising that Sekhon himself has, of late, become still more free from dogma and the application of partisan politics in literature. His mellowness is strongly resented by more rigorous ideologues like Gurcharan Singh. Sekhon shocked the Progressives by describing the contribution of Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, the leading Experimentalist, as wholesome and of lasting significance in Panjabi literature.[93] Looking from the other end of the spectrum, it is interesting to notice that Ahluwalia does not refute Marx, and in his latest book of critism professes a Marxian approach to literature. Marxism, free from partisan politics and rigid dogmatism, thus, continues to be the central force in the current of contemporary Panjabi writing. Sekhon, because of his relative liberalism, still remains in the mainstream and is its important inspiration. Besides many critics who continue his work indirectly, there are others who are carrying it on directly, retaining a Marxian framework for their thinking, but assimilating into it the insights derived from other sources, as, for instance, Tejwant Gill, who has tried to combine Marxism with the findings of psychoanalysis in his interpretation of literature. Kishan Singh, after deepening the current of Panjabi writing by a thorough application of Marxism, because of too strict an adherence to ideology, at this moment, seems to have become peripheral to it. But Marxism has become an integral element of Panjabi literature and bids fair to remain an enduring part of its legacy.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a discussion of Sajjad Zaheer's trip to the Panjab to elicit the help of Urdu writers there, see his *Rūshnāī* (Illumination) (Delhi: Azad Kitab Ghar, 1959), pp. 30-55; in Urdu. All vernacular sources cited in this paper are in Panjabi except when indicated otherwise.

2. Satinder Kaur, *Sant singh sekhoṅ dī nāṭak kalā* (The Dramatic Art of Sant Singh Sekhon) (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1972), p. 15. All translations into English, except when specifically indicated otherwise, are by the author of this article.

3. Mohindar Pal Kohli, *The Influence of the West on Panjabi Literature* (Ludhiana: Lyall Book Depot, 1969), p. 171.

4. Sant Singh Sekhon, "Panjābī sāhit vic vād" (Isms in Punjabi), in *Samkālī panjābī sāhit* (Contemporary Panjabi Literature), ed. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia (Patiala: Panjabi University Press, 1968), p. 62.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

8. *Sāhitārath* (Theory of Literature) (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1957), pp. 9-10. The Indian counterparts of ministers, *bhats* are composers and reciters of eulogistic works. They form a separate caste.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

31. *Sāhit samācār* (Literary News), Sekhon Number, December 1955, p. 6.

32. *Chē ghar* (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1967), p. 120.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

35. *Kalākār* (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1954), pp. 56-57.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

38. Attar Singh, "Sekhoṅ dā nāṭak *kalākār*," (Sekhon's Play, *The Artist*) in Jiwan Singh, ed., *Sāhit saṁācār dā nāṭak ank* (The Drama Number of *Literary News*), September 1970, pp. 317-334.

39. Balwant Gargi, *Nim dē pattē* (*Nim* Leaves) (Delhi: Navyug, 1968), p. 95.

40. Thakar Datt Joshi, *Balwant gārgī dī nāṭak kalā* (The Dramatic Art of Balwant Gargi) (Jullandur: New Book, 1971), p. 71.

41. Balwant Gargi, *Lohā-kut* (Delhi: Navyug, 1970), p. 52.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

48. For example, Gurcharan Singh, Thakar Datt Joshi, *Balwant gārgī dī nāṭak kalā*, p. 70.

49. Gargi, *Nim dē pattē*, pp. 37-38.

50. *Sail patthar*, 4th ed. (Jullandur: Hind Publishers, 1958), pp. 4-6.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

53. *Nim dē pattē*, pp. 35-36.

54. Surinder Singh Uppal, *Panjābī kahāṇīkār* (Panjabi Short Story Writers) (New Delhi: Pushh Prakashan, 1970), p. 170.

55. Sant Singh Sekhon, *Jhūthīāṅ sacīāṅ* (Fact and Fiction) (Chandigarh: Panjab University Press, 1956), p. 170.

56. *Sekhoṅ dīāṅ kahāṇīāṅ* (Sekhon's Short Stories) (Jullundur: Central Publishers, 1966), p. 135. All quotations from Sekhon's short stories are taken from this cumulative edition.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

67. Uppal, *Panjābī kahāṇikār*, p. 127.

68. Sujan Singh, *Sawāl jawāb* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1962), pp. 8-9.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

70. *Nawāṅ rang* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1968), p. 10.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

73. Uppal, *Panjābī kahāṇikār*, p. 120.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Sujan Singh, *Nawāṅ rahg*, p. 103.

76. Kohli, *The Influence of the West on Panjabi Literature*, pp. 175-176.

77. Devinder Satyarthi, "Ann-dēvtā" (The Grain God) in *Conviāṅ panjābī kahānīāṅ* (Selected Panjabi Short Stories) (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1971), pp. 60-70.

78. Surinder Singh Narula, "Apanaṛē hāth ārsī" (A Mirror in My Own Hand), in *Nāvalkār surinder singh narulā* (The Novelist Surinder Singh Narula) (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1970), p. 130.

79. *Ibid.*

80. Sekhon, "Panjabi sāhit vic vād," p. 62. Sekhon tells us that Mohan Singh started literary magazines, first *Likhārī* and then *Panj daryā* (1940), to publish Progressive writers.

81. Mansoor (Husain Ibn Mansoor al-Hallaj), an Iranian Sufi mystic, crucified in 922 by orthodox Muslim authorities for declaring "I am Truth (God)."

82. "From the Prison Cell" in Pritam Singh, ed., *The Voices of Dissent* (Jullundur: Seema Prakashan, 1972), p. 46. This is a book of English translations from some contemporary Panjabi poets.

83. Amarjit Chandan, ed., *Miṭṭī dā rang* (The Color of the Earth) (Jullundur: Shakti Press, 1970), p. 3. All subsequent quotations from the Naxalite poets are taken from this volume.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

85. The poem contains many allusions to events, activities and things associated with the life of Guru Gobind Singh. Machivara is the jungle where the Guru found refuge after his army's rout at the hands of the Moghuls. *Zafarnāmā* (The Song of War) is a long poem by the Guru, an open letter to the Moghul emperor, pointing out the latter's tyranny and treachery. The Guru referred to the underdog as the "sparrows" whom he taught to fight the "hawks," the tyrants. At Sarhand, two of his sons were buried alive in a wall at the order of Moghul officials. Anandpur was the Guru's base. Sirsa is a river in which much of his writing and that of his companions was lost during their rout from Anandpur.

86. Kishan Singh, *Sāhit dā somā* (Ludhiana: Panjabi Sahit Prakashan, 1967), pp. 10-11.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

92. *Ālocnā* (Criticism), July 1957, p. 51.

93. Sant Singh Sekhon, "Samkāli panjābī sāhit" (Contemporary Panjabi Literature) (Ludhiana: Panjab Sahit Akademi, 1971), pp. 18-19. This paper was read at the Tenth All-India Panjabi Conference of the Panjabi Sahit Akademi on 27 December 1970 at Chandigarh.

D. D. KOSAMBI'S SANSKRIT SCHOLARSHIP:
A MARXIST APPROACH TO SANSKRIT LITERATURE

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The words "Sanskrit scholarship" which appear in the title of this paper will, doubtless, lead many to think that it has been included purely by error in a panel devoted to an inquiry into Socialist Realism in South Asia. Indeed, the "Sanskrit" alone may convince some that it has been offered to the wrong professional association.

To be sure, both notions have something to be said in their behalf. There is precious little in the vast mass of surviving Sanskrit literature that could be, by an stretch of the imagination, called realism. Certainly there is nothing at all that could be said to be Socialist.

Nonetheless, in discussing plans for this panel, the chairman and I concluded that, for a number of reasons, a brief treatment of the possibilities of a productive Socialist analysis of traditional Indian literature would not be out of place.

Accordingly, we decided that I should undertake a presentation and, to a limited degree, analysis of the work of the foremost, if not the only Marxist, Sanskrit scholar India has produced in recent years, Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi. It is my hope that this presentation may serve to stimulate and direct further radical critiques of traditional Indian literature and culture by those who, like I, love them.

Whatever else might be said of him, it is beyond argument that the late Professor Kosambi had one of the most fertile, incisive, wide-ranging and, in every way, extraordinary minds that India, or for that matter any other nation, has produced in this century. Primarily a distinguished mathematician, he made provocative and significant contributions to such varied fields as engineering, numismatics,[1] archeology, ethnology, Indian history, literary criticism, and Sanskrit text-criticism in an astonishing career of intellectual virtuosity.

Kosambi was not only a man of astonishing intellectual virtuosity; he was, too, like his distinguished father, Dharmanand,[2] a truly radical thinker, a passionate exponent of ideas received with a good deal of hostility in his own social milieu. His uncompromising Marxist view of history, art, and culture, and his consequent attacks on many cherished Hindu rites, beliefs, and scriptures did little to endear him to his own community, the generally conservative brahmin groups of Maharashtra.[3] It is typical of his striking iconoclasm, and indeed of a peculiar ambivalence with respect to the value of the Sanskrit tradition which characterize his work, that he could dedicate a volume in the austere and pious Singhi Jain Series to the memory of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; and, further, that the dedication should be written in rather ornate Sanskrit.[4]

It is precisely this ambivalence, this rejection of Sanskrit and its literature as the decadent product of a decadent class coupled with a genuine fascination and even love for its greatest achievements, that makes a discussion of Kosambi's work so valuable. For where he criticizes and even condemns, it is as one who knows well and views with sympathy and even fascination the object of his critique. It is easy for a Marxist with no understanding or real feeling for the esthetic values of the Sanskrit literary tradition to assault it out of hand as the elitist fantasies of the priestly and princely ruling classes of feudal India, classes who cultivated their refined esthetic in the luxury afforded them by the expropriation of the meager surplus of starving millions. Surely this is the underlying truth of the matter. Yet just as surely, these ruling classes were functions of an unavoidable stage of historical development, as was their class literature. On the other hand one should not, in discussing the beauty or emotive power of much of Sanskrit literature, forget the terrible social reality that made it possible.

Both positions, that of the disinterested Marxists and that of the socially oblivious literary historians, have been set forth many times. What was unique about Kosambi was the way in which both positions interweave in his approach to Sanskrit studies. It is not that he was able to synthesize the two approaches. Indeed, they are often seen to be at war in his work. It is rather that, as a man involved in two traditions, Kosambi in his life and work suggests a number of areas of fruitful research on the part of radical literary historians and even (*śāntaṃ pāpam*!) Sanskritists.

With this in mind, then, let us turn to a closer examination of Kosambi's approach and attitude towards Sanskrit studies and an evaluation of some of his methods, conclusions, and contributions.

As mentioned above, Kosambi was by no means a professional Sanskritist, nor had he been trained in Sanskrit learning by the traditional methods.[5] He was a Professor of Mathematics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay and it is a tribute to his intellectual virtuosity and perseverance, as well as an indication of the degree to which Sanskrit fascinated him, that in addition to his regular duties and studies and the many books and articles he produced in other fields, he found time to prepare two very distinguished critical editions of Sanskrit verse anthologies,[6] collaborate in the translation of a Sanskrit play,[7] and write a number of analyses of specific and general problems of Sanskrit language, literature and culture.[8]

Kosambi's attitude towards the culture whose highest classical expression is Sanskrit is not ambiguous. With characteristic forcefulness he writes:

> The subtle mystic philosophies, tortuous religions, ornate literature, monuments teeming with intricate sculpture, and delicate music of India all derive from the same historical process that produced the famished apathy of the villager,

> senseless opportunism and termite greed of the 'cultured' strata, sullen un-coordinated discontent among the workers, the general demoralisation, misery, squalor and degrading superstition. The one is the result of the other, the one is the expression of the other.[9]

Yet despite this uncompromising denunciation, one finds that Kosambi dedicated a good part of his time and energies to such work as the critical editions of Bhartṛhari's *Śatakatrayam* and Vidyākara's *Subhāsitaratnakośa*, both classic examples of the elitist cultural expression which he so soundly indicts. Moreover, in many places, Kosambi is full of praise for numerous examples of the "ornate" literature whose source he so deftly lays bare. Let us examine this ambivalence with regard to Sanskritic culture in detail.

Kosambi's identification of Sanskrit learning and literature with a dominant elite is, of course, not startling. One need not labor an obvious point. What is of interest, however, is Kosambi's elucidation of the history and exact function of the language as a class medium, as both marker and instrument of the subjugation of the productive classes of Indian society. Kosambi relates the two periods of Sanskrit revival to distinct social-historical events. Many scholars have noted the fact that, unlike in Europe where one sees, in the case of the Romance languages, a relatively steady historical development of the modern vernaculars through the "old" vernaculars, out of vulgar Latin and, perhaps, the classical idiom, Sanskrit seems to give way gradually to the Prakrits in the two or three centuries B.C. only to undergo a revival in the first centuries A.D., which begins to eclipse the less archaic idioms until the rise of the modern vernaculars. Kosambi suggests that this is so simply because the emerging ruling classes, under the successive systems of imperial monopoly and various kinds of feudalism, look to Sanskrit both as a marker of upper-class unity and a cultural rationale for class distinction in which capacities it served until roughly 1200 A.D.[10] In short, for Kosambi, the reversion to Sanskrit as the medium of administration and literature is a result of a fresh allocation of surplus.[11] In accordance with this analysis, Kosambi had a good deal to say with respect to the various kinds of Sanskrit texts. For him the enormous mass of religious and technical literature is almost wholly the result of the abstracted activities of the brahmin class interested centrally in using the ancient language to lend the sanction of antiquity to new practices, such as the increasing rigidity of caste observance, which characterize the new social order.[12] It is with respect to these two classes of the literature, the epic-*purāṇa* on the one hand, and the *śāstras* on the other, that Kosambi is harshest in his judgement. He dismisses the latter, technical literature, a bit hastily as illustrative of the displacement, so common in certain types of Sanskrit text, of meaning by form.[13] The failure of these texts, and with them, the failure of traditional Indian science and technology to keep pace with that of other cultures of comparable complexity, he attributes to the growing estrangement of their authors from direct application of technique. The brahmanical class entrusted with the scientific tradition is depicted as obsessed with trivia, given over to esoteric presentation, and on the whole, "ashamed to participate in trade, warfare, or experimental science."[14] There exists, Kosambi notes, "no Sanskrit work of any use to the blacksmith."[15] This analysis is not wholly fair. In a sense, once one accepts the evident fact that Sanskrit is a class-medium, it becomes almost redundant. Moreover, it ignores the truly scientific nature of much of the early *śāstra* and *sūtra* literature. Is not the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* a scientific work in the best sense of the term? What is missing in Kosambi's treatment is a meaningful treatment of the underlying social reasons for the decadence of Indian science in the medieval period. Why was their no social impetus for advanced technology?

Kosambi's irritation and contempt for the technical writers seems to be clearly a function of his own passionate interest in techniques. Readers of any of his historical, ethnological, or numismatic work cannot fail to be impressed by the number and extent of his digressions on techniques -- techniques of pottery, techniques of coinage, techniques of irrigation, techniques of snare-making and so on. Here, as elsewhere in his writings, Kosambi has perhaps let personal predilection color his analysis.

So great, in fact, could Kosambi's bitterness towards the ruling elite be that he felt it necessary on several occasions to attack the Sanskrit language itself. Not only did he condemn the "imprecision" of the language's technical terminology, he claimed, somewhat doubtfully I think, to find evidence in the morphology of Sanskrit itself for class domination of the medium. Thus he felt that "speical moods such as the 'benedictive'" suffice to show priestly domination.[16] Elsewhere he states that the language lacks a simple future tense for "everyday use."[17] Both remarks are tendentious.

It is with respect to religious and traditional literature, specifically the conflated *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas*, that Kosambi most signally fails to provide a serious or convincing critique. He views them centrally as vast repositories for the endless moralizing and religious strictures of the brahmins, created to supplement the closed and outmoded Vedas as the hallowed authority for the status quo.[18] Now to a certain extent this was the case. On the other hand, to dismiss these words, particularly the great epic, which are so manifestly significant in the formation of the attitudes and behavior of virtually all classes of Indian society as mere moralizing doggerel is surely to miss the point. Not only does Kosambi write off much that is powerful and even moving in the great epics (while condemning later literature for lack of depth and power), but again he chooses to ignore, for the most part, works of enormous social import. I say "for the most part" because there is one striking exception to Kosambi's shoddy treatment of the epic tradition. This is his treatment of the most widely known and influential portion of the great epic, the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

In his discussions of the *Gītā*, we see Kosambi at his polemical best. Here he shows most clearly and with evident gusto his penchant for iconoclasm and for attacking head-on even the most dearly cherished convictions of his society. He agreed, as would many, that the *Gītā* is a most characteristically Indian work which, in his opinion, comes ultimately to form the Indian character in something of the way in which *Don Quixote* "set its stamp on the Spanish literati."[19] Yet his evaluation of the work, and by extension, the "Indian character," must certainly have come as a shock to many Indians. This "Bible of Hinduism" is characterized, he felt, by "slippery opportunism" as are "so many *Gītā* lovers."[20] The central feat of the text is, for him, the reconciliation of the irreconcilable,[21] while on the subject of orthodox idealism as presented in the *Gītā*, he said simply, "Once it is admitted that material reality is gross illusion, the rest follows quite simply; the world of 'doublethink' is the only one that matters."[22]

This is not the place to enter into an analysis of Kosambi's attack. From one viewpoint, to be sure, it has a certain congency; still as serious criticism, it is hardly fair and, like much of Kosambi's Marxist analysis, fails to allow for the basic Marxist tenet that social realities determine conciousness.[23] Moreover, it is clear here that Kosambi set great store by shocking the sensibilities of the bourgeois, and particularly the brahmin, community.

What is of greater interest here, though, is Kosambi's analysis of the fate of the *Gītā* in India. He points out that its enormous popularity does not appear to have followed very closely upon its composition, but rather to have developed around the time of the rise of Indian feudalism. This he attributes to the fact of the suitability of the dominant *bhakti* element of the *Gītā* as a model for the new mode of social-economic relation of chains of feudal loyalties.[24] Now this is perhaps a bit simplistic, but it is suggestive and is a good example of a tenable, or at least arguable, materialist thesis concerning a major determinant of Indian culture.

If Kosambi gave rather short shrift to the technical and religious literature, it is because his chief interest, despite his occasional generic condemnations, in Sanskrit was in the area of "art" literature, of *kāvya* and *nāṭaka*. It is here that Kosambi made his most significant scholarly contributions in the area of Sanskrit studies and in which the ambivalence of his attitude is most apparent.

In general, Kosambi tended to condemn Sanskrit literature as the "literature of a class not of a people."[25] Yet he himself freely admits that this is originally true of much literature and, for example, specifically the greatest of the Elizabethans.[26] The real issue is not whether a given literature is class-bound, but rather, the function and fate of the given class to which it is bound. Finally, in discussion of the highly class-restricted anthology of Vidyākara, Kosambi decides that it cannot be condemned simply on the grounds that it is class literature.

Further, despite the fact that he held, in general, that Sanskrit literature is "at best exquisite" but lacking in depth,[27] his criticism of specific authors frequently reveals a greater enthusiasm and higher critical regard. For example, his evaluations of the works of Kālidāsa, Srī Harṣa, Daṇḍin, and several other writers are, in fact, glowing tributes to their genius and hardly the products of one hostile to the literature.[28]

His criticism of lesser and later poetry as overly ornate and of rarified appeal is well taken, though, as mentioned above, it is with such work that he chiefly occupied himself.

It certainly takes no great powers of perception to see that the *subhāṣita* literature, in which area Kosambi did such notable work, was the special preserve of a leisured class. Nor need we labor this point further. Yet there remains one area of great interest in this connection in which Kosambi has provided us with much to consider from the viewponts both of a Marxist theory of social history and Indian literary history. This is the subject of the poets themselves. In this area, the always murky problem of Indian literary biography, Kosambi has in his introduction to his brilliant edition of the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* shed a few more badly needed rays of light in the form of further concrete data on the dates and provenance of a number of quoted poets.[29]

Yet it is in a more general context here that Kosambi raises a number of points which, I think, bear significantly on radical theories of literature and art in general. The issue here is Kosambi's ambivalent evaluation of the poets as artists. On the one hand he praises them for their talents, citing their charm, tastefulness, and avoidance of excess.[30] On the other he describes them as "talking house-bird[s] of higher rank"[31]; as poverty-stricken beggars eking out their meager livelihood by singing to the rich about a luxury that they as poets can never posess.[32] At best he sees others like Bhartṛhari as poets of "frustration" who offer at most an "escape," but no "solution" to the grinding contradictions of their own societies.[33]

Kosambi was right in depicting these poets both as talented masters of a refined art and as slavish appendages to a decadent class. Here is a sound economic-historical analysis coupled with a grudging, but genuine, appreciation of the esthetic canons of the genre. Yet through all of it Kosambi betrays a bias which he might stoutly have denied. His final judgement of the latter Sanskrit poets -- that they dealt with no major problem of the human spirit, nor sought to free humanity from its shackles, that in short they exchanged comfort for immortality[34] -- seems once more to ignore Marx's sound dictum quoted above. Worse, it appears to hold out what is essentially a bourgeois-romantic view of the function of the poet or artist, which could have had no meaning for feudal India.

We have sought here to touch only lightly upon but a few of the many issues raised by the provocative work of this extraordinary amateur Sanskritist. I have, I fear, not done real justice to the breadth and dash of the man's mind, nor captured the passion and daring which informed all his work. What I have tried to do is show how D. D. Kosambi laid a sort of groundwork which might, perhaps, encourage further, deeper study towards future radical analyses of much that is to be cherished in Indian culture.

FOOTNOTES

1. It was in fact the amateur Kosambi who reduced the study of ancient coin-hoards to a mathematical science. See his article "Scientific Numismatics," *Scientific American*, CCXIV, No. 2, (Feb. 1966).

2. For a first-hand account of the career of the remarkable Dharmanand Kosambi, see Muni Jina Vijaya Ji's "Foreward" to D. D. Kosambi's edition of Bhartṛhari's *Śatakatrayam* (*ŚT*), Singhi Jain Series no. 23 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1948).

3. Another cause which contributed to Kosambi's isolation from the communities of Poona brahmins was, as I learned from talks with many who knew him, his acerbity. On the other hand, he had a fine sense of humor which he could turn, as well, on his own sharp tongue. See his amusing comment on this trait in his note on p. 351 of his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (IIH)* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1956).

4. A translation of the dedication would read: "For the pure memory of the precursors of modern human society, the glorious great men whose names are Marx, Engels, and Lenin." Kosambi, in a characteristic blow against sentimentality, chose not to dedicate the book to his father, since the latter had himself chosen to fast to death. This solved, Kosambi felt, "no major social problem of our times." (*IIH*, p. 11.)

5. In fact, he undertook the edition of the *ŚT* with virtually no knowledge of Sanskrit at all. The late V. S. Sukthankar had assured him that he could pick up a knowledge of Classical Sanskrit from Bhartṛhari's stanzas "as he went along." (*ŚT*, pp. 1-2) Kosambi comments of the actual difficulty of such a task, but the results, this superb edition, speak for themselves.

6. The *ŚT* and the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa*, ed. with V. V. Gokhale (*SRK*), Harvard Oriental Series Vol. 42 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

7. *Love's Enchanted World* (Bhāsa's *Avimāraka*), trans. with J. L. Masson (Varanas: Motilal Banarsidas, 1970).

8. Sections on these areas appear in the introductions to his two editions (*ŚT* and *SRK*) as also in *IIH*, *Ancient India: A History of Its Culture and Civilization (AI)* (New York: Pantheon, 1965) and *Myth and Reality (MR)* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1962).

9. *IIH*, p. vii.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 261ff.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

12. *MR*, pp. 32-33.

13. *IIH*, *loc. cit.*

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 265-66.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

17. *AI*, p. 168.

18. *IIH*, p. 268.

19. *AI*, p. 206.

20. *MR*, p. 17.

21. *AI*, p. 207.

22. *MR*, *loc. cit.*

23. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970). See pp. 16-17. Curiously enough Kosambi quotes Marx on this issue (*IIH*, p. 9), but often seems to ignore this basic point in any Marxist analysis of history.

24. *AI*, p. 208.

25. *IIH*, p. 265.

26. *SRK*, p. lviii.

27. *IIH*, *loc. cit.*

28. *AI*, pp. 200-204.

29. See Professor Ingalls' remarks in this connection, *SRK* p. ix.

30. *SRK*, p. lxii.

31. *Ibid.*, p. xlvii.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *ST*, p. 11.

34. *SRK*, p. lxii.

THE INFLUENCE OF MARXISM ON THE POETRY OF SRI SRI

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BACKGROUND

For about nine hundred years written Telugu poetry was largely religious, traditional and followed the pattern set by the masters Nannayya (11th century) and Tikkanna (12th century). This is the great stream of Telugu literature called *mārga*, "classical." Another stream called *dēsi*, "native," comprising oral folk forms, continued to run its more or less independent course. The literary establishment has all along maintained the superiority and purity of the classical tradition, which has shown a high degree of Sanskrit influence. For various historical reasons which are outside the scope of the present study, a surprising uniformity of language, meters, and themes was maintained from the eleventh century down to the early twentieth.

The classical tradition maintained its vitality until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By that time scholarship, marked by servile obedience to Sanskrit, had acquired dominance over expression and creativity in literature. Scholars believed that Telugu used for writing should be in strict conformity with the prescriptive rules of Sanskritic grammars and that language as spoken by the people was impure and wrong. However, there was not yet a well codified set of rules for Telugu covering the entire area of literary usage.

Into this power vacuum entered the *Appakivīyamu*, a treatise on meter, and the *Bālavyākaraṇamu*, a new grammar. These books quickly came to be regarded as absolute and unquestionable authorities. Every word written had to conform to the rules they contained. Even the great writers of earlier periods were judged by the standards of these two books. Literary criticism dwindled to finding-fault with language and meter. Scholars spent all their time arguing the purity or impurity of words. They swore that even a great poem was vitiated if it contained one "mistake." All contemporary literature was considered worthless because it was grammatically "flawed." Nothing needed to be written since no one could write the classical language better than the classical poets. All that a given generation need accomplish was enough learning to appreciate the old literature.

A word here regarding the rules of Telugu meter is relevant. Most of the meters used by Nannayya, the first poet, were Sanskrit in origin and the few "native" meters that he did use were modified to fit the Sanskrit tradition. These meters -- complicated and rigid though they were -- faithfully adhered to by all later poets. The rules left very little scope for the changed forms of language to be incorporated into poetry. This was mostly the reason why the language of poetry remained unchanged even over a period of nine centuries, even though the language spoken by the people changed. As a result the language of literature and that spoken became two different dialects.

In the later half of the nineteenth century two writers started, almost simultaneously, two different movements in literature. One was Gurajada Appa Rao and the other Rayaprolu Subba Rao. Gurujada was a realist; he used *dēsi* meters and wrote on social themes in the spoken dialect. Rayaprolu was the leader of what later came to be known as *bhāva kavitvam*, similar to the romantic movement in English poetry.

The influence of Gurajada remained negligible for a long time and *bhāva kavitvam* dominated literature. Krishna Sastry is the greatest poet of this school. The effect of the movement was to revive the freshness of sensibility, not to challenge the rules of language and meter. Poets of the *bhāva kavitvam* school, while introducing the lyrical mode, themes of love and personal sentiment, conformed to the old rules of grammar and meter.

The 1930s were years of economic depression in India as well as Europe. The evil effects of colonial rule became increasingly obvious to the intelligentsia and to the common people. The on-going Socialist transformation of Russian society and along with it, the doctrines of Marx and Engels began to attract the attention of people. A strong trade union movement was on the rise and the Communist Party was gaining strength.

When Sri Sri appeared on the Telugu literary scene in 1928 with his first book of poems, *Prabhava*, he was under the influence of the *bhāva kavitvam* of Krishna Sastry. By 1934 there was a marked change in Sri Sri's poetry. In that year he wrote *Mahāprasthānam* (The Great Journey.)

With *Mahāprasthānam* a new age in Telugu poetry was started. Concern for the common man and the use of spoken Telugu forms and simpler meters were the most important changes Sri Sri initiated. Since then political themes in poetry became acceptable. Poetry was no more meant for pleasure alone. Sri Sri himself was inspired by Marxist ideology and the concept of class war. Four decades later, Sri Sri still continues to be the most powerful influence on Telugu literature. He personifies the aspirations of young writers and the hopes of the common people. The sounds of language acquire a magical significance in his poems influencing the reader and the listener far beyond any critical analysis can explain. He is one of the greatest Telugu poets of this century.

MARXISM AND SRI SRI'S POETRY

The first poem that shows any Marxist influence on Sri Sri is his "Mahāprasthanam" (The Great Journey):

> Another world, another, another world called. Go
> forward, go surging, let's go, let's go, forward,
> forward. . . .[1]

The poet is talking of a new world, a new life, a new society. The poem is full of symbols of destruction leading to a new creation. The path to another world is not smooth. Many sacrifices are to be made before the final goal is reached:

> Let's go forward, offering as ritual sacrifice,
> the blood of our hearts. . . .[2]

And:

> Move forward saying: 'Harōm! Harōm! Hara!
> Hara! Hara! Hara! Hara'. . . .[3]

Hara is a name of Siva, the god of destruction in the Hindi trinity. "Harōm! Hara! Hara!" is the battle cry of the militant Saivite sect of Hindus. All through this poem, as well as in his other poems, Sri Sri uses religious symbols with a secular meaning. Finally there is an obvious reference in the poem to the red flag, which is associated with the Marxist ideology and the Communist Party:

> Go forward like cobras, like hunting dogs, like
> Dhanunjaya, [a hero in the *Mahābhārata*]. Don't you see
> the blinding brilliance of the crown of fire, the red
> flag, the flames of sacrifice of another world![4]

The poem uses all the force of religious symbols such as *tarpana*, the ritual offering, *hōmajwāla*, the sacrificial fire, both associated with geographical obstacles to be overcome, rivers, forests, mountains and deserts. Secularized use of religious symbol made this a poem of political and social significance, calling people to collective action, involving great sacrifices, to destroy the old world and build a new world. At a time when the many poets in Telugu were writing poems on romantic love, full of sentiments of sadness and poems glorifying the past history of the people, this poem came like a shock. This is the first poem in Telugu with a powerful social cause as its subject.[5] Earlier poets considered flowers, moonlight, music of the heart, the beautiful black eyes of woman, and soft flowing words alone fit for poetry. With this poem, social themes and an entirely new diction came into poetry. Sri Sri came to be the leader of what is known as the *abhyudaya*, or "Progressive," Movement in Telugu poetry, a movement emphasizing the commitment of the writer to the progress of the people.

"Pratigna" (Vow) is a poem in which the poet dedicates his poetry to the cause of the common people. The poem starts with the Marxist concept that labor is the source of all wealth:

> There is no price for the sweat that flows on
> the body of the heros of labor, the peasants that
> till all the fields and fill the world with wealth
> and happiness. . . .[6]

And:

> There is no expert to evaluate the price of the tears of workers who labor in the mines, fields and the factories, serving the capitalist lords and the devils of the machine. . . .[7]

The poem then describes the miserable conditions in which the working people live, and expresses the poet's faith in revolution:

> Those who suffer in prisons innocently from bad luck, those who suffer under the iron boots of the demons of money, those who, unable to earn a living from their labor, go on strike in desperation, those who, from the fruitlessness of their labors, from misery of life, search for means of suicide, many more of them, many more wretched miserable restless souls, will blow the conch of revolution with a loud pitch, with a tremendous sound. . . .[8]

Continuing, the poet declares that his poetry is committed to the cause of the workers and peasants:

> Therefore, I write poems that lead to the solution and elimination of the injustice in the world, burning hunger and killing misery, poverty and atrocities, and I dedicate the new poetry that is moving inside my heart to the welfare of the working people and to the well being of the peasants. I announce that there is nothing equal to the beauty of the life of the worker. I wish good luck to the heroes of labor and to the warriors of work. . . . I sing the strain of the future scripture that will be born out of the truthful picture of the life of misery.[9]

Sri Sri foresees new scriptures that will be born out of truthful representation of the life of misery. By his use of the word *vēda* for the new scripture in this context, the poet implies a lack of faith in the Veda of the Hindu religion, belief in the infallilibity of which has been the foundation of religious authority. These lines could be read to imply that the Veda of Hindus is the scripture of and for the ruling class. The new age will have its own scripture, yet with a difference. The voice of this scripture will be human, living, amenable to change, not infallible, as opposed to the Hindu scripture, which is God's word, infallible and rigid.

"Vādu" (He) is a poem which is based on the concept of classes, the capitalist and the proletariat. Prior to Sri Sri, dividing people in this way is totally foreign to Telugu poetry:

> We manufacture all these beautiful goods. And one man appropriates them for himself. When we cry "This is injustice," he says: "Suffer, this is your *karma*." We work all day from morning till evening as bullocks do. He does not even give us food and treats us as logs. When we say, "This is atrocious, this is horrible"; he says, "This is tradition, you can not break it."[10]

Traditional poetry is full of the concept of *karma*. Some people are poor and some are rich. This is because of their *karma*, their actions in previous lives. Happiness or unhappiness does not have a direct cause-and-effect relationship with whatever happens in this life. If one is poor or rich, healthy or sick, honored or ill-treated, it is because of his deeds in his previous lives, to suffer the consequences of which the soul is born again and again into this world. Sri Sri ridicules this concept and shows that the capitalist class thrives on religious belief, perpetuating its control on the workers.

Another concept that Sri Sri questions is that of "tradition." This word has held an unquestioned sway on the Indian mind. The owner of the factory or the farm uses it as his argument to justify his treatment of the workers.

The tone of ridicule and sarcasm in the poem becomes deeper when the opportunist attitude of the owner is exposed in the last stanza. When the workers go on strike, in sheer desperation, he beats them and justifies his action by the principle that violence is the cure for violence.

In "Midhyāvādi" (One who advocates the theory that world is illusion) Sri Sri ridicules the metaphysics which serve the interests of the bourgeoisie:

> Do you say that the Rolls Royce car of the landlord is *māya*? What do you say, dear sir?
>
> Do you say that the money purse of the Maharaja is *māya*? What do you say, dear lord?
>
> The sweat on the brow of the farm hand, the distress of the wage earner, the hunger of the beggar, do you say all these are *māya*?

Māya, illusion, is one of the basic concepts of the Vedanta School of Hindu philosophy. According to the belief of this school, all of the physical world is illusion. The ultimate reality is *brahman*, the eternal. The individual soul, *ātman*, is essentially the same as *brahman*, perceives itself as different because it is enveloped by *māya*. Knowledge of this phenomenon relieves the soul of all its problems by awakening itself from the dream world of physical diversity, resulting in the realization of its oneness with ultimate reality. The word *māya* has lost its philosophical precision and came to be used to explain away social injustice and personal misery.

The new use it has acquired made it easier for the rich to live in luxury while the poor lived in poverty. The most dominant concern of the poem is the callous use of religious concepts to explain away problems of life. The poem exposes the detestable tendency of the religious leaders who have held a great sway on the masses and by promoting the opiates of religious beliefs.

"Dēsa caritralu" (History of Nations) is a poem which shows an even deeper influence of Marxist theory on Sri Sri:

> What's there to be proud of in the history of any nation?
> The history of all humanity is the story of exploiting others.
> The history of all humanity is the story of oppressing the poor.[12]

Sri Sri's poem on history divides all of humanity into two classes, the oppressed and the oppressors. It cuts across national boundaries and talks about the international proletariat. The Communist Manifesto declares: "The working men have no country," which is obviously the inspiration for the idea in this poem:

> The rickshaw-puller in China, the mine worker in
> Czechoslovakia, the dock-worker in Ireland, the
> Hotentots, the Zulu, the Negroes, oppressed people
> of all the countries, will announce, in one voice
> the truth of history.[13]

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This statement of the Communist Manifesto finds a powerful poetic utterance in Sri Sri's poem. He depicts the dialectical forces that shaped history and prophesies the doom of capitalist system:

> The order of society which permits exploitation of
> one man by another man, of exploitation of one nation
> by another nation, will not endure hereafter.[14]

Finally, the poet says that the history of a nation is the history of its common people, not its kings:

> Why was a war fought, how lond did a dynasty rule,
> dates and documents -- these are not history. What
> is the life of the common man in the civilization
> on the Nile? Who are the laborers that carried
> stones to build the Taj Mahal. . . . It is not
> the *pallaki* in which the king sat; who are the
> servants who carried it on their shoulders?[15]

All the poems shown above were written during the 1930s. After 1940, Sri Sri turned to surrealism, which the Marxist critics consider completely non-social. In the late 1940s, Sri Sri began writing poems on current political problems and issues, leaning to the left and often representing the attitudes taken by the extreme leftist parties in India. The poem he wrote on Kennedy warning him in behalf of the proletariat of the world of grave consequences if he should commit aggression against Cuba,[16] the poem on Lumumba,[17] and the poem against the action of the Congress government in Delhi when it dismissed the Communist ministry in Kerala,[18] are examples of his interest in contemporary political events.

Even during the 1930s when Sri Sri wrote most of his revolutionary poems, he was writing pieces which were romantic and subjective in content. Very good poems as they are, they exhibit little Marxist social consciousness or commitment.

Though his surrealist poems were mostly written during the 1940s when he drifted into a state of detachment from the society, there is an unmistakable strain of romanticism all through his poetic career. A very puzzling picture will emerge if one follows the public statements he made on a number of occasions. His literary tastes leave no definite scope to pigeon-hole him into any one category. A list of his favorite European writers, some of whom he said influenced him as a writer, includes Swinburn, Baudelaire, Poe, Joyce and Mayakovsky. His favorites among Oriental poets range from Sankara to Nazrul Islam. Marxist critic K. V. Ramana Reddy and Professor C. Rama Rao have rightly pointed out that Sri Sri's understanding of Marxism and dialectical materialism is minimal and often incorrect.[19] It is far too easy to show examples from his poems and his vast body of prose works written over the past four decades to prove that he is not a serious Marxist. But if one takes his poems and relates them to the situation and time in which they were written, one point emerges clearly. Whenever the poet responded to the condition of the people or to a political situation, he did so essentially *like* a Marxist. But when he turned inward and responded to his subjective world, he made experiments with surrealism, romanticism and many other "isms." He indicated that his reputation as a poet should rest more on his Marxist poems than on his other works. He even disowned his surrealist past in one of his interviews. It is important to note that he has been un-Marxist, but never anti-Marxist.

Problems of individual liberty in Communist countries have not engaged the attention of Sri Sri. He wrote two poems on Russia, one during World War II, and the other on the occasion of his second visit to Moscow in 1967. Both the poems speak in glowing terms about the great Socialist country. The problems that concerned George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, and other writers and intellectuals of the western countries are not relevant to the present situation in India. As Gandhi said, "Even god should appear to hungry people in the form of food." Talking of "civil liberties" to impoverished masses does not make sense. As a poet who identified himself emotionally with the cause of the people of India, Sri Sri shares such a point of view. He went even further in his attitude to individual liberties. Writing on George Orwell's *1984*, he said:

> Orwell does not like the dictatorial nature of Communism. But where is the alternative? It is in the process of our search. Meanwhile, brilliant writers like Orwell help capitalism indirectly when

> they write anti-Communist fiction. There is a danger of the rotting reactionaries gaining new strength with the help of writers like Orwell.[20]

Sri Sri's personal philosophy is best expressed in his "Sadasat samsayam," which questions the real and the unreal, an enigmatic, unfinished poem.[21] In this poem he is deeply concerned with the philosophical problem of ultimate reality. Contrary to the doctrine of materialism which firmly denies the existence of a super-human power, the poet shows an uncertainty about the existence of God. He doubts the ancient speculative philosophers of India who advocated the permanence of soul. Yet, he himself is not sure of a final answer. The tentative answer he arrives at, after a long discussion within himself, is of enlightened agnosticism. Nothing is known for certain except birth and death. Fear of pain and death are the source of all philosophy. Different people have different answers to the problems of evil and sin. The common concern of all these quests is: "The collective good behavior of people in society."

The poem is important for the anti-Hindu attitude it takes and the reliance on the ability of the human being in knowing the secrets of the universe: "The mind we have, if we use it well; the secrets of the universe will come to light."

This idea, however, agrees with the concept of dialectical materialism which syas that our knowledge of the world is authentic and that there are no unknowable things. Stalin says in his *Historical and Dialectical Materialism:*

> Marxist philosophical materialism holds that the world and its laws are fully knowable, that our knowledge of the laws of nature, tested by experiment and practice, is authentic knowledge having the validity of objective truth and that there are no things in the world which are unknowable, but only things that are still not known, but which will be disclosed and made known by the efforts of science and practice.[22]

The influence of Marxism on Sri Sri is more emotional than philosophical. The humanist message of Communism has had a very deep appeal to him. But it is not possible to conclude that he is a dialectical materialist. However, his commitment to the cause of common people of India and the human beings everywhere is unmistakably evident in his poetry:

> O, people of the world
> Undivided by boundaries!
> Man is my music.
> Man is my message.[23]

FOOTNOTES

1. Sri Sri, *Sri sri sāhityam* (Collected Works of Sri Sri), 5 vols., ed. K. V. Ramana Reddy (Vijayawada: Visala Andhra Pracuranalayam, 1970), II (Poetry, 39. Prose translations of all poems quoted here are mine and are intended to convey the semantic, not the literary quality, of the originals.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

5. Talking later about this poem, Sri states that he was influenced by the London Manifesto of the Progressive Writers' Association and by the poems of Nazrul Islam, Harindranath Chattopadhaya, Alexander Block and La Internationale. See *Sri sri sāhityam*, Vol. III (prose), 527.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 79.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 72

11. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

16. *Ibid.*, Vol III (poetry), 111.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

19. K. V. Ramana Reddy, "Sri sri mahāprasthanam," *Sṛjana*, No. 14 (February 1970) (Sri̱ Sri Special Issue), pp. 9-19, and C. Rama Rao, "Vimarsa kuḍugā sri sri," *ibid.*, pp. 99-112.

20. *Sri sri sāhityam*, Vol. III (prose), 308.

21. *Ibid.*, Vol. III (poetry), 54-63.

22. Joseph Stalin, *Historical and Dialectical Materialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 15.

23. *Sri sri sāhityam*, Vol. III (poetry), 33.

ART, LIFE, AND MYTH: ASPECTS OF THE POETIC THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FAIZ AHMED FAIZ

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The Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, judged by his reputation, popularity, and critical acclaim, is a major poet, and though not so great as Ghalib or Iqbal, he clearly belongs in the same league. He has achieved his stature by helping to give the tradition of Urdu poetry a new direction. In his poetry the rose still blooms, the *bulbul* continues to sing, the cup of wine is still passed around, the moth keeps getting scorched by the heartless flame, and the lover still paces the street where his "beautiful lady without mercy" resides dispensing favors to all but the wretched lover. But Faiz has managed to give the elements of poetic tradition a new significance; behind those melancholy expressions one does not find the orgasmic ejaculations of a woebegone lover; instead, they convey a sense of suffering, a sense of human kinship, and a desire to share with others knowledge of a way of life distinguished only by an absence of hopes or promises of fulfillment. Faiz, according to N. M. Rashed, himself an Urdu poet of considerable talent and reputation, "enables the time-worn cliches of the Persian and Urdu *ghazal* to acquire a renewed sensitivity and to be recharged with meaning, so that the solitary suffering of the disappointed romantic lover is transformed into the suffering of humanity at large."[1] He is certainly correct.

At the onset of his career, the poetic theory and practice of Faiz, by his own admission, was carefree and self-absorbed, but this temperament was altered first by the economic impact of the international depression of the early 1930's, and second, by his association with the Socialist and the Progressive circles of the Indian subcontinent. He started out as a poet who was content with poetry that emphasized art for its own sake; beauty and poetry were for him their own sufficient rewards, but he changed into a socially conscious poet for whom the rationale for poetry stemmed from its concern for life. In the wake of his change, he felt that

> . . . one cannot isolate his own self from the rest of the world, oblivious to his environment. Isolation, even if it was possible, is a very unprofitable act because an individual, in spite of his loves and sorrows, pleasures and pains, is a very limited and ordinary being. The measure of one's depth is only to be found in his emotional and psychological relationships with the human community, particularly those relationships that involve mutual sharing of pains and sufferings; consequently, the sorrows of loving and the sorrows of living are different forms of the same experience.[2]

The core of Faiz's esthetic theory is to be found in the view that to love is to live, where love means something more than erotic yearnings and to live means to know and share human sufferings.

Faiz has directly and indirectly expounded his poetic ideals in several of his poems. One such poem is "Poetic Theme" (*Mauzū-e-suxan*), in which the poet makes known what he desires as his poetic theme. Concerning the "world of his verses and thoughts," he writes:

> What has happened to the descendents of Adam and Eve
> Who have lived up till now in the shade of red and black centuries?
> In the face-to-face confrontation of life and death
> What will happen to us? What happened to the ancestors?
> Why do the teeming multitudes in these illuminated inhabitances
> Live only in the expectation of death?
> Our poetic theme can be nothing but this,
> Poetic temper can live nowhere but here!

Muhammad Iqbal is an Urdu poet who did poeticize the "face-to-face confrontation of life and death," according to Faiz. In his two poems about the poet, both entitled "Iqbal," Faiz makes known his views regarding the function of the poet. In praising his predecessor for having revived through his poetry the dead carcass of the Eastern people, Faiz is, in fact, exemplifying what he considers to be an ideal poet. In the first poem, written in 1931 while Faiz was still a student and Iqbal was still alive, the admiration of the younger poet for Iqbal is unqualified. He writes:

> Time was that every being desired death --
> Human limbs had lost the power to act,
> Deathly silence had covered the earth,
> Even the sounds of the mourners were not to be heard in the wasteland.
> . . . .
> At last those oblivious of their destination heard the familiar sound.
> Your song broke down the spell of silence,
> Lost dreams were awakened from the intoxication of neglect,
> Self-awareness replaced oblivion in heart and soul.

While still praising Iqbal for his poetic powers, in the second poem Faiz laments his death and mourns the desolation which has once again settled on the land. One infers from these two poems that in Faiz's poetic theory the poet is assigned the role of a prophet who must use his poetry to reach his compatriots and make them conscious of life.

While believing in the efficacy of poetic prophecy, Faiz is aware that poetry, though it can revive communal consciousness, cannot cure communal misery and sorrow by itself because the cure can be provided only by the community itself. This is the thesis of the poem "My Companion, My Friend" (*Mere hamdam mere dost*), which reads:

If I could be sure, my friend, my companion,
If I could be sure that the weariness in your heart,
The sadness in your eyes, the burning in your breast
Could be cured by my comforting, my loving
. . . .

If I could be sure of this, my friend, my companion
I would keep diverting you night and day,
I would keep on singing light, sweet songs
About waterfalls, spring and garden,
Coming of the dawn, the moon, and the planets.
. . . .

But my songs are not the cure for your sorrow,
Not the song of the surgeon but that of comforter,
Not the song of the scalpel but only the balm to soothe.
Your malignancy, though, can be cured only by the scalpel --
Such cutting redeemer is not in my possession,
Neither is it in the keeping of any earthly being;
Only you have it, only you, only you!

Another poem which shows Faiz's awareness of communal misery is the one entitled "Dedicated to Today and to Today's Sorrow" (*Aj ke nām aur āj ke gham ke nām*). Written in free verse, the poem is a litany of those segments of society who have his regard and to whom he would dedicate his work. The various segments include weary clerks, laborers, postmen, and horse-carriage drivers toiling ceaselessly; peasants whose cattle are yanked away and whose daughters are abducted; suffering mothers whose children refuse to be comforted in the night; girls who have grown weary of being ornaments for the loveless beds of corruption; students who go out in search of knowledge but fail to return home. It is to these segments of society that Faiz would like to dedicate his poetry. The poem derives its poetic power from its stark, albeit blatant, realism, but its chief merit consists in the clues it provides concerning the sensibility of a poet who, among other things, has spent a great deal of time organizing labor movements, was often jailed for so-called "subversive" views, and who has been awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962.

A poet, as visualized by Faiz, must thus be aware of life around him and he must use his poetry to make others aware of life. Poetry for him must be used as a means to social ends. But, on the other hand, blatant social concern could turn poetry into polemics, and polemics, no matter how prophetic, can never be a substitute for poetry. Faiz is aware of this, and he avoids didactic pitfalls by communicating his concern for human ills, not in terms of slogans but by means of poetic devices. Despite his powerfully and deeply felt human concerns, he never abandons the poetic tradition, and this is what entitles him to his rightly won acclaim.

Faiz's achievement stems from his having used the very romantic tradition of Urdu poetry for treating social themes rather than lamenting orgasmic unfulfillment. His best poems are those in which his social concern and the poetic tradition of Urdu have been fused. In such poems, which include many of the poems written in prison, Faiz has fused form and content; the two working in unison modify each other in such a way that the resulting product is neither social polemics nor sensual clichés, but poetry. Faiz is not the only one to use the medium of Urdu-Persian poetry for expressing social protest in a poetic manner, but he certainly is among the best ones to do so. It must also be admitted that in the process he has given those clichés new significance and vigor. His poem "The Dawn of Freedom" (*Subh-e-āzādī*) is a good example of his characteristic fusion of form and content. The title would lead one to expect a socio-political discourse, and, to be sure, the poem does talk about the end of British rule in India and the birth of Pakistan. The message, however, is conveyed in a medium taken from the tradition of love poetry. The poet is talking about consummation (*wisāl*), though the context of consummation is not orgasmic, but social. Faiz takes issue with those who see the birth of Pakistan as analogous to consummation; instead, he feels that the consummation is yet to come, and he exhorts them to keep struggling to find true fulfillment:

> This spotted dawn, this dawn bitten by night,
> Not the dawn for which we had so anxiously awaited;
> This is not the dawn for which comrades wished as
> They set forth to find, somewhere or other,
> The final destination of the stars in the desert of the sky.
> At least somewhere then there will be a shore for the lazy
>   waves of night;
> At least somewhere the ship of the heart's sorrow will dock.
> When the comrades set forth on the mysterious highway of youth,
> How many hands fell upon the hem of their robe!*
> From the impatient bed chambers of the cities of beauty
> Arms kept crying out, bodies kept tempting them.
> But the zeal of dawn's face was more precious;
> The skrit of the beautiful maidens of glory were very near.
> Their desire was as if efforvescent; their tiredness had
>   been supressed;
> It is said that the separation of dark and light has already
>   taken place,
> That the union [*wisāl*] of the destination and of the way to it has
>   already occurred,
> That the behavior of suffering people is already changed.
> The pleasure of union is allowed; the torture of separate forbidden.
> The fire of the heart, the desire of a glance, the passion of the
>   heart --
> On none of these is found a trace of the cure for separation.

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*The allusion here is to the Koranic story of Joseph and Potiphor's wife, who tears the young man's garment as he leaves her, having refused her amorous advances; scorned, she accuses him of attempted rape; he claims that if his garment is torn in front, he is guilty; if torn in the back, he is innocent. The garment was, of course, torn in the back.

Where did the beautiful lady, the breeze, come from; where did
she go?
Even now the lamp lit in the street does not know where she is.
Even now the heaviness of night swells;
No moment of release for the eye, for the heart.
Move on, for we have not yet come to that destination.

(trans. Carlo Coppola)

Faiz's poetic canon is not limited to romantic forms. He has on many occasions discarded sensual romance in favor of realism-on-the-rocks. Romance is totally lacking from the quite successful poem "There Is No Savior of Crystals" (*Shīshoṅ kā masīḥā*), in which broken pieces of crystal glass serve as a correlative for tradition, giving objectivity to the poem's prophetic content. The poet equates the traditions his compatriots are living by to broken pieces of glass and urges their junking:

Even if a pearl, crystal, a goblet or jewel,
What is broken is broken.
How can it be mended with tears?
What is broken is thrown away.

Downcast, you sit hiding the pieces in your lap.
There is no savior of crystals.
You sit with hope, in vain.

Perhaps, somewhere in these very pieces
Is that heart's goblet where, sometimes,
The fairy of love's sorrow's wine
Would appear with great coquetry.

People of this earth robbed
You of the goblet, then shattered it.
They let the wine run in the street,
They broke the guest's bright wings.

Perhaps these pieces are
Bright crystal dreams
With which you, in your intoxicated youth,
Adorned your solitude.

Poverty, work, hunger, sorrow
Vied against these dreams.
From all sides they showered you with stones.
What else could these crystals do?

Somewhere, perhaps, among these pieces
Lies your honor's pearl
That makes your humility
Envied by poplar-tall men.

Merchants and robbers
Search for that precious good.
This is the land of theives. Here,
If the poor man's life is spared, his honor is not.

These goblets, crystal, rubies, pearls,
If intact, fetch a good price;
If broken, as now,
They only pierce the heart and make you weep blood.

Downcast, you sit holding crystals in your lap.
There is no savior of crystals.
You sit with hope, in vain.

Merely darning memories' torn garment
Will not make the heart live on.
Life cannot be worked as a stitch,
One put in, one pulled out.

Replacements are found for everything
In this workhouse of life
Where goblets and crystal are hewed.
All laps can be filled.

Here, the hand stretching forth is victor,
The eye looking up gains wealth,
Wealth and fortune without end.
But thousands of thieves lie in wait.

Where are the shops of life
Emptied by thieves' pillage and plunder?
Here, every mountain filled with diamonds,
Every sea, with pearls.

Some men
Draw curtains about this wealth,
Auction
Every mountain and sea.

Some fight
To rent these drapes,
To confuse
Each ploy of life's thieves.

These two battle
In every city, every village,
In the breast of every home,
On the brow of each road.

The first go about spreading darkness,
The other light lamps;
The first scatter fire,
The other strive to drown these flames.

Every goblet, crystal, ruby and pearl
Are wagered in this game.
Arise! All empty hands
Are called to this battlefield.

(trans. C. M. Naim and Carlo Coppola)

Faiz is not so successful in non-traditional genres; it seems that without the buffer of tradition his utterances often take on an unpoetic blatancy. The rhetorical bathos of the following lines from "To the Rival" (*Riqīb se*) can be attributed to a lack of artistic distance between the poet and his subject:

Whenever the laborer's flesh is sold in the market
Or the blood of the destitutes flows on the avenues
And one with a belly reaching out like a flood
Asks to drawn the hungry masses,
Flames keep leaping in my breast
And I lose all control of my heart.

The imagery in this poem is too gaudy and insistent; it seems the emotional content has overwhelmed the form. Fortunately such lapses are not frequent.

By surrounding his concern for life with the framework of Urdu poetic tradition, Faiz has managed to effect a metamorphosis; he has turned polemics into poetry. But he often fails to deal with the "face-to-face confrontation of life and death," something which by his own reckoning ought to be the ideal theme for a poet. All too often such "confrontations" are wasted on the periphery, because life and death are rarely invoked in his poetry. He tries to reach them through what are, in fact, tangential means, such as hunger, disease, corruption, prostitution of mind and body, and the absence of basic freedoms; but these are effects, the symptoms only of underlying sickness that has taken hold of Faiz's compatriots. To deal with this underlying sickness effectively, one ought to clash head-on with life and death, and this Faiz is either unable or unwilling to do, and as a result, his verse does not achieve greatness.

Faiz's failure to write great verse could be explained in light of Northrop Frye's ideas concerning the use of myth in literature. The use of myth, according to Frye, gives shape to literature, for "literary shape cannot come from life; it comes only from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth," since literary genres and conventions can ultimately be traced to mythic sources.[3] Furthermore,

> In the first place, mythology as a total structure, defining as it does a society's religious beliefs, historical traditions, cosmological speculations -- in short, the whole range of its verbal expressiveness -- is the matrix of literature, and major poetry keeps returning to it. In every age poets who are thinkers (remembering that poets think in metaphors and images, not in propositions) and are deeply concerned with the origin or destiny or desires of mankind -- with anything that belongs to the larger outlines of what literature can express -- can hardly find a theme that does not coincide with a myth. (p. 33)

When one applies Frye's ideas to Faiz's poetry, it seems that while Faiz does use literary myths, he leaves out from his poetry "religious beliefs, historical traditions, and cosmological speculations." The literary conventions and the traditions of Urdu love poetry are freely used by Faiz, and this is, in fact, responsible for giving objectivity and "literary shape" to his concern for life. But the erotic myths of Majnuun and Farhaad, as used by Faiz, tend to become ends in themselves rather than being means towards poeticizing the "face-to-face confrontation of life and death." Indeed, one wishes that Faiz would have taken to heart his poem "Beloved, Don't Beg Me for My Former Kind of Love" (*Mujh se pahlī sī muhabbat marī mahbūb nā māng*), where he says:

Beloved, don't beg me for my former kind of love.
I used to think that if you existed, life was resplendent!
If I cared for you, then why quarrel about the world's sorrows?
Spring was held manifest in the world by your face;
Except for your eyes, what else was there in the world?
If I were to win you, fate would be defied.
It was not like this; I only hoped it would be.
There are other sorrows in the world besides love,
Other comforts than the comfort of consummation;
Dark, brutal phantasmagorias of countless centuries
Woven in silk, satin and brocade;
Bodies sold in narrow streets and bazaars,
Spattered in mud, blood-smattered;
Bodies pulled from the oven of disease,
Flowing pus from running sores.
I still look back to these sights. What am I to do?
There are other sorrows in the world besides love,
Other rest than the rest of consummation.
My love, don't ask me for my former kind of love.

(trans. Carlo Coppola)

It is rare to find Faiz utilizing the possibilities offered him by mythology. One of the poems in which he is conscious of mythic possibility is "Window" (*Darīcā*). This poem, stemming from his experiences in prison, deals with the natural landscape as seen through the prison window. The poem talks about the cyclic comings and goings of natural objects like the moon and the morning breeze, while using the myths of Christianity and Islam as a backdrop for their focus. The poem reads:

So many crucifixes struck in my windows,
Each colored in the blood of its Messiah,
Each with the hope of a divine consummation.
Some are for sacrificing the spring cloud,
Some for murdering the glorious moon,
Some for spread-eagling an intoxicated sapling
And some for murdering the morning breeze.
Every passing day these glorious divinities,
Drenched in blood, enter my chamber of sorrows,
And every passing day my eyes behold
The resurrection of such *shahīds*.[4]

the idea being conveyed by the poem is that the prison has neither totally isolated the poet nor destroyed his spirits. Even though the world is not available to him in an unrestricted manner, he finds solace in comparing himself to natural objects that are available to him, albeit in a dismembered form. The bars in the prison window, by preventing the poet from freely enjoying the natural beauty, act as crucifixes for the natural objects. In spite of their dismemberment by the bars, the natural objects keep repeating their life and death cycle. The theme of recurrence is reminiscent of Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence,"[5] Such comparison is highly tentative and debatable indeed, but it is a fact that by using the allusions to the crucifix, Messiah, resurrection, and *shahīd* as a backdrop to the cyclic regeneration of nature, Faiz has not only objectified and enriched a personal experience, but he has been able to deal directly with the "face-to face confrontation of life and death" and to poeticize it. It seems that the confrontation remains unresolved, because even though life returns, it returns only to be crucified again; the final victory escapes both the antagonists.

Faiz's failure to use the full potential of myth in giving his verse greater depth is best observed when one compares him to Iqbal. The two poets are alike in that they both try to reshape literary tradition according to twentieth-century needs. But Iqbal, unlike Faiz, had no qualms about using the full potential offered by mythology. He brings to bear in his verse a deep knowledge of religion, history and philosophy. Iqbal's use of myth is analogous to James Joyce's use of mythology. Joyce, in the words of T. S. Eliot, by "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" had found a "way of controlling, or ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[6] The difference between the poets can be easily observed by comparing Iqbal's "Tariq's Prayer" (*Tāriq kī duā*), which appeared in *Bāl-e-jibrīl* (Gabriel's Wing, 1935) to Faiz's "Dogs" (*Kutte*), the second a parody of the first. Both poems embody a concern for the moral and material inertia gripping their compatriots, but here the similarity ends. The persona of Iqbal's poem is Tariq, the Moslem commander who invaded Spain with a handful of soldiers and conquered it. The persona prays in the battlefield that his band of believers will be granted the faith which will help them realize their objectives. The success achieved by Tariq is not being celebrated for its own sake, but Iqbal is drawing a "parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" in order to inform the contemporary Moslem world of its inertness. He wants his people to cultivate the faith of Tariq. The conventions of the Urdu *ghazal* and historical traditions help give poetic objectivity to Iqbal's philosophy. A full discussion of his philosophy partakes not only of Islamic mythology, but also of elements from the ideas of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Bergson and is beyond the scope of this paper, but in the context of this poem, it is sufficient to say that Tariq's faith stands for "creative passion, high emotion, divine spark, enthusiasm for an ideal, ardent self-dedication, or the force that drives the individual to realize himself through wrestlings with the world and with God."[7] In formulating his notions of faith, Iqbal was able to draw upon his knowledge of Islamic traditions along with Nietzsche's ideas concerning "superman" and Bergson's philosophy of "*élan vital.*"

Faiz's poem is not mythopoeic; rather it invokes contemporary inertia through realism. Instead of a "superman" gifted with "*élan vital*," we have starved dogs fighting over bones and living in sewers:

Dogs, straying on the road, delighting in want;
Their assets, a curse; their wages, rebukes from all.
No rest at night nor at dawn;
Their home — gutters, filth.

If they bicker, let them fight
Toss them a bit of bread.
They get kicks from everyone;
Death, by starvation.

If these creatures would lift their head,
Even man would forget his haughtiness;
If they wanted, the world could be theirs.
They could gnaw their masters' bones.

If only someone would show them their disgrace.
If only someone would twist their sleepy tails.

(trans. Carlo Coppola)

Here we see that Faiz speaks of possibility of a revolution which would result in these mongrels' tearing apart their oppressors and making the world their own, provided "someone would twist their sleeping tails." But Faiz does not elaborate the precise nature of this revolution here or elsewhere. The poem, like so much of Faiz's verse, can hardly be called a "face-to-face confrontation of life and death"; instead, it is bogged down in the symptoms, strays around the periphery, and, in spite of its realism, talks only in generalities. Briefly speaking, having advocated the abandonment of tradition by his countrymen in "Shīshoṅ kā nasiha," and having followed his own advice, Faiz is in effect left without the benefit of mythic frameworks, in whose validity he need not have subscribed totally, but which would have given his verse greater depth.

FOOTNOTES

1. Interview with N. M. Rashed, *Mahfil, A Quarterly of South Asian Literature*, VII, 1-2, (1971), 8.

2. Translated from "*Faiz az faiz*," an autobiographical sketch of Faiz included in the volume of his collected verse, *Harf harf*, (Rampur: Kitabkar Publications 1965), pp. 22-23. The text of the poems referred to in the paper follows this edition. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

3. Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Myth*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963), p. 36.

4. I have used the original word rather than the closest English approximation, "martyrs," in view of the religious connotation of the Urdu word. The Moslem tradition maintains that a *shahīd* is not to be considered as being dead, for he has won immortality by virute of his sacrifice. This must be understood in reading the poem.

5. Compare the poem with the following excerpt from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra:*

> "Now I die and vanish," you would say, "and all at once I am nothing. The soul is a mortal as the body. But the knot of the causes in which I am entangled recurs and will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of eternal recurrence. I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent -- not to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life, in what is greatest as in what is smallest, to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things, to speak again the word of the great noon of earth and man, to proclaim the overman again to men." (*The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed., Walter Kaufmann [New York: Viking Press, 1970], p. 333.)

6. T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," *The Dial*, LXXV (1923), 483.

7. I have defined Iqbal's view of faith by resorting to the definition of *ishq* given by V. G. Kiernan in his notes to *Poems from Iqbal* (London: John Murray, 1955), p. 106, for the two are interchangeable.

THE SOCIAL ROLE OF THEATRE IN INDIA

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The role that theatre ought to play in contemporary society has been debated among artists the world over, no less in India where changing social and political conditions since the late nineteenth century have resulted in diverse attempts to exploit theatre as a means of reaching vast audiences for purposes of education, publicity, and propaganda. But the groundwork for the relatively recent attempts may be seen in past precedents and need not be attributed solely to the inventiveness of the modern age or to the progressive thinking of youth. In Chapter I of the *Natyasastra*, India's earliest and most significant surviving manual of dramaturgy, Bharata attributes to Brahma the creation of an educational purpose for theatre:

> This (*natya*) teaches duty to those who go against duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfilment, and chastises those who are ill-bred or unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned.
>
> It will (also) give relief to unlucky persons who are afflicted with sorrow and grief or (over) work, and will be conducive to observance of duty as well as to fame, long life, intellect and general good and will educate people.
>
> There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art or craft no device, no action that is not found in the drama.[1]

Whether or not producers achieved Brahma's ambitious objectives may never be known, for there is little evidence to suggest that spectators in ancient times changed their behavior or opinions as a result of witnessing plays.

But much later in history the actions of at least one powerful king were reportedly influenced by the contents of a drama which he had seen. In 1504 Veera Narasimhadeva Raya, a powerful ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire, put to death a petty, tyrannical price after observing *kuchipudi* players impersonate the hideous tortures employed by the tyrant to extract taxes from the peasants.[2] Between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries theatre was widely used to great advantage by poet-saints to spread and sustain the *bhakti* movement of Hinduism among the common people throughout the length and breadth of India. Perhaps one of the most spectacular surviving examples is the *ramlila*, which still attracts hundreds of thousands of faithful pilgrims annually to sacred shrines and holy places in North India.

The more recent and perhaps the more interesting phase in which theatre has served as an instrument of social change began in the late nineteen century when dedicated patriots were committed to exposing social evils, many of which had resulted from British rule and many of which had plagued Hindu society for centuries. This first period, marked by an unrestrained desire among Indian writers and producers to propagate independence, is also characterized by suppressive restrictions imposed by the colonial government on the publication and performance of plays.

A second period began in the early 1940s when independence was virtually assured, but the direction that the new nation would take was still debatable. This period is characterized by an eagerness among left-wing political parties to exploit theatre as a vehicle of propaganda, and although the ideas initiated then are now over thirty years old, they show no signs of losing their original appeal or flavor, for political parties and politicians still clamor for ways to gather votes and sympathy for their own ideologies.

The most recent phase dates from the early 1950s when the Central Government employed theatre as a means of serving Democratic Socialism. Since that time the Central Government has joined hands with some state governments and a few private institutions seeking to publicize various social reforms, a primarily among the villagers. Barely out of its infancy, this utilitarian approach to theatre may not mature for many years to come.

Theatre as the Servant of Nationalism

The first significant drama of social protest in India was *Nildarpana* (The Mirror of Indigo Planters) by Dinabandhu Mitra, published in 1860. The play dramatizes incidents drawn from the revolution of 1858 in which Bengali indigo cultivators were mercilessly persecuted by their English overlords for refusing to sow their crops. The incident is usually cited as the first attempt of the Bengalis to harass the British rulers. In spite of its timely subject matter, Hemendra Nath Das Gupta in *The Indian Stage* claims that Dinabandhu had no political motives behind the work and intended it only to expose the cruel and heartless treatment of the laborers at the hands of English planters.[3] Whatever Dinabandhu's real intentions, the play aroused considerable public sentiment in Bengal against British tyranny and paved the way for a host of patriotic works written along similar lines elsewhere in the country.

Nildarpana was first staged in Dacca in 1861 where it met with unqualified success among the Indian spectators and apparently aroused no adverse reaction from the English community. In the same year as the first public performance, a sanction was granted to the Reverend James Long for an English translation on the grounds that the play faithfully depicted rural life in Bengal. Approximately five hundred copies were printed and sent to the Bengal Office for approval. But only fourteen were permitted to circulate freely in India and the remaining copies were either sent to England under official seal or withheld by the Bengal Office. The good Reverend was paid for his trouble by being sentenced to one month in prison on a charge of libel and ordered to pay a fine of Rs. 1,000. The fate of Reverend Long and the English translation suggests that British policy at this time favored the immediate suppression of any material that smacked of sedition. Through its actions the Government of Bengal admitted that English, the very language nurtured among a segment of the Indian population as a means of sustaining indirect rule, could be effectively used to promote nationalistic sentiments among Indians throughout the country. That the Bengali version of the play was not suppressed was probably because the Government rightly assumed that it would not be read outside the Bengali-speaking regions of the country.

Eleven years passed before *Nildarpana* attracted public notice again, this time in 1872 when it was chosen as the first professional offering of the newly formed National Theatre of Calcutta. Undoubtedly, the production was designed as a commercial venture to launch the National as the first professional theatre company in India, but the choice of *Nildarpana* as the vehicle suggests a more significant underlying motive; the play was meant to symbolize Indian nationalism. Apparently it struck a sympathetic cord in at least one spectator who furiously hurled a shoe at the hated English overseer, acted by the distinguished actor-playwright, Girish Chandra Ghosh.[4]

Even though the Government took no formal steps against the production in Calcutta, an enraged band of Europeans stormed the stage during the Lucknow production of 1875 when the Indian hero of the piece tried to rescue a helpless Indian girl from the clutches of Mr. Rogue, the villainous English planter. The outburst became so heated that the district magistrate had to be called out of bed to quell the disturbance.

Encouraged by the impact of *Nildarpana* in 1875, three more works were produced by the Great National Theatre, a splinter organization of the National. All of them were allegories propagating patriotic sentiments. The extent to which the Bengalis dared to go in expressing their demand for freedom from foreign rule is illustrated in a song from one of the works -- Jyotirindra Nath Tagore's *Puru-Vikram*. Midway through the play, King Porus challenges his soldiers to fight the Greek invaders:

> Awake. Arise! Look, the cruel, Yavanas [i.e., Greeks] trespass into your home; be of one mind, liberate the Motherland. Delay is intolerable. Advance with the banner of victory in your hand. What is life without freedom? Fie on him who wants to live being robbed of his liberty. It is better to die, but let liberty and honour live in the land. Come and swear. Either you must win or die. Either you must kill the Yavanas or follow death yourselves.[5]

King Porus undoubtedly personified the spirit of Indian patriotism and the Yavanas unmistakably represented the colonial rulers.

The popularity of *Nildarpana* and subsequent works of its kind raised serious questions for the colonial government. Should any play, regardless of its content, be permitted public performance? Should the press be allowed to publish a play whatever sentiments it espoused? In 1876 Lord Northbrooke, then the Viceroy of India, issued an ordinance as an emergency measure under the Government of India Act giving the Government of Bengal full power to control dramatic performances until a new law could be enacted. The Government moved swiftly to cancel three productions which it labeled "libelous and obscene."[6] Subsequently, the proprietor of a theatre and actors of the play *Surendravinodini* were taken into custody on a charge that an obscene act was discussed on the stage: a European (perhaps meant to represent the district magistrate himself) spoke of deflowering an Indian woman and carried a bloody sari to prove it. Two of the accused were sentenced to a month in prison, although the judge dismissed the charge of obscenity lodged against the play for lack of convincing evidence. Shortly after, the presiding judge was sent home to England, presumably because he failed to rule in the Government's favor.

Finally, on 14 March 1879, the Dramatic Performances Act No. XIX was submitted to the Supreme Legislative Council, and Mr. Hobbhouse, who introduced the bill, concluded the arguments in support of his case by paraphrasing Plato's reasoning from the *Republic*. Hobbhouse said, "Now it has been found in all times and in all countries that no greater stimulous could be supplied to excite the passions of mankind than that supplied by means of the drama."[7] The Act was swiftly passed into law and gave liberal censorship powers to local authorities throughout India.

In essence, the Dramatic Performances Act is modelled on similar contemporary laws in England and is designed "to empower the Government to prohibit public dramatic performances which are scandalous, defamatory, seditious or obscene." Furthermore,

> for the purpose of ascertaining the character of any intended public dramatic performance, the Local Government may apply to the author, proprietor or printer of the drama about to be performed, or to the owner or occupier of the place in which it is intended to be performed for such information as the Local Government thinks necessary.
>
> Every person so applied to shall be bound to furnish to the same to the best of his ability, and whoever contravenes this section shall be deemed to have committed an offense under section 176 of the Indian Penal Code. If any Magistrate has reason to believe that any house, room or place is used, or is about

> to be used for any performance prohibited under this Act, he may, be his warrant, authorize any officer of police to enter with such assistance as may be required by night or by day, and by force, is necessary, any such house, room or place and to take into custody all persons who he finds therein, and to seize all scenery, dresses and other articles found therein and reasonably suspected to have been used, or to be intended to be used, for the purpose of such performance.[8]

Hardly three months passed before the Vernacular Press Act also became law, thus throttling free expression of the press as well as the stage.

Both Acts were frequently used by the Government throughout the decades which followed to suppress dramatic performances and plays considered seditious. However, the urge for Indian independence had been unleashed and the instruments of government could only hope to slow down the process.

Frustrated by censorship, many theatre organizations in the late nineteenth century turned their efforts to exposing glaring social evils in Indian society, such as alcoholism, child marriage, enforced conversion by Christian missionaries, women's education, the purdah system and widow remarriage.

With the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, however, many playwrights resorted to veiled allegories propagating nationalism and spreading disaffection among sympathetic spectators. They often did so with great imagination by imbuing Hindu mythologies with allegorical significance. One of the best known examples is Probhakar Khandilkar's 1906 Marathi play, *Keechakavadha*, based on incidents from the *Mahabharata*.[9] The well known story pictures Keechaka, the crude brother-in-law of King Virata, falling hopelessly in love with Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandavas, who live in disguise in Virata's court. Pursuing his lecherous designs, Keechaka steals into Draupadi's room in the dead of night only to find Bhima, the most powerful and jealous of the Pandavas, who unhesitatingly pulverizes Keechaka with his mace, thus avenging Draupadi's honor. Marathi readers easily recognized in Bhima the great Marathi patriot, Lokamanya Tilak; Keechaka obviously represented Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. Like so many other Marathi plays of its day, *Keechakavadha* was banned from the stage.[10]

Numerous other mythological incidents provided ample scope for symbolizing the struggle for freedom from foreign oppression. The battles between Rama and Ravana in the *Ramayana*, as well as those between Krishna and Kamsa in the *Puranas*, provided Indian patriots with considerable latitude for creating dramatic allegories.

Historical events glorifying India's past also captured the public imagination and helped to reinforce the idea that independence was to be sought at any cost. After the partition of Bengal in 1905, Girish Chandra Ghosh turned to writing historical allegories and produced three powerful dramas -- *Sirajuddulla, Mir, kasim,* and *Chhatrapati shivaji* -- all of which were banned by the British Government under the Dramatic Performances Act.[11]

Elsewhere in India, other playwrights glorified their own local patriots: in Assam, the struggle of the Ahom kings with the Burmese invaders was dramatized; in Maharashtra, Shivaji's exploits came to symbolize Tilak's political struggles; in Mysore, Ecchama Nayaka, Tipu Sultan, Nargund Baba Sahib and Kittur Chennamma provided the subject for many nationalistic dramas. To the chagrin of the British, every region found legendary heroes to glorify.

Theatre as a Tool of Political Ideology

Themes of nationalistic and patriotic fervor continued to dominate the stage until independence was finally won in 1947, but diverse political philosophies decidedly sympathetic to Socialism and Communism began to be detected by the early 1940s in many plays and among various theatre organizations. The developments in this period arose logically out of past successes; the argument followed that if theatre could be used as a tool for inciting public opinion against the colonialists, it could also be used effectively to mold public sympathy for specific political ideologies. Undoubtedly, the triumph of Socialist Realism in Russian art and literature during the previous decade stimulated sympathetic Indian playwrights and producers with creative ideas. But besides the examplary work of the Moscow Art Theatre, the Group Theatre of New York, and especially the works of its prize-winning playwright, Clifford Odets, must have appealed to Indian theatre artists who were very much aware of recent trends in theatrical activities in all the major western countries.

Thus, in the twilight of World War II, one of the most significant organizations of its type came into being -- the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). According to Som Benegal in *A Panorama of Theatre in India*,

> It is not clear and probably never will be whether the I.P.T.A., as it was called, was born of a positive directive of the Communist Party of India, or whether it came about through the anti-fascism of the war years with some remote identity with the international artistic movement of progressive forces. . . .[12]

Whatever the original political intent of the IPTA, it clearly directed its messages to the masses rather than to the bourgeoisie and it "took up issues of social abuse, religious bigotry, political oppression and economic exploitation."[13]

The central character of Syed Sajjad Zaheer's one-act Hindustani play, *Bimar* (The Sick Man), written in the early 1930s and published in 1941 in the author's English translation entitled "The Living and the Dead," articulates the axis of the peasant-laborer versus the middle class which was to recur often in the works of the IPTA playwrights. On the verge of death, Bashir says:

> The law as it now stands says that he who labours shall not get the fruits of his labour; the custom is that those who do nothing become lords and masters of those who toil. The workers might die of hunger while the leisured spend their time in comfort and luxury. Convention demands that if those who labour ask for the fruits of their labour, then they should be called seditionists and rebels, and serve as targets for bullets. . . . Wealth, which ought to be the fruit of labour, is in the hands of useless, inept, stupid, half-witted and short-sighted fools. And he who has wealth has power; and he who has power lays down the law and makes principles. For me obedience to such principles is a crime against humanity.[14]

The IPTA started as a low-key affiliate of the left-wing Anti-Fascist Writers and Artists Association of Calcutta in 1942. Bands of artists, singers and dancers toured the country performing to aid victims of the disastrous Bengal famine of 1943, which is said to have taken the lives of more than two million people. Capitalizing on the corruption resulting from the famine, Bijan Bhattacharya wrote *Nabanna* (Bountiful Harvest) in 1944, which is regarded as the first major offering of the IPTA.

> It showed a group of peasants who leave their famine-striken village and make the long journey to the city only to find themselves beggars, facing the indifference of the metropolis. Their stay in the city politicizes them and they decide to return to the village with their new awareness.[15]

Nabanna became a popular success perhaps due in part to the brilliant direction of Sombhu Mitra, who is still regarded as one of India's leading directors. Thousands of people gathered to see the play in public theatres and open-air arenas.

Soon after *Nabanna's* triumph, new branches of the IPTA sprang up throughout Bengal to deal with other social issues -- the hard life of laborers and farmers, the responsibility of the middle class to the workers and the advantage of mass action.[16]

Apparently, the IPTA's mission at this stage in its development was not to propagate the Communist Party line, but simply to expose social injustices, for Bhattacharya is quoted as saying, "Our job was to prepare the soil. It was the job of the political people to sow the seeds."[17]

The enthusiasm and the desire of the membership to create an association of first-rate artists prompted the IPTA to organize nationally, with branches throughout India. It was then that some of the most talented young artists were drawn into the fold -- men like Ravi Shankar, Mulk Raj Anand, Ramesh Thapar, Shanti Bardhan, and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, to name only a few. Talented playwrights also contributed substantively to the IPTA's work.

In orissa, Kalicharan Pattnayak wrote *Bhata* (Rice) which deals with the problems of untouchability and hunger among Oriyan peasants. The story concerns a cruel landlord whose only son turns against him and joins the rebellious peasants. In an ensuing conflict, the son is fatally shot. Rather unconvincingly, the penitent father reverses his philosophical stand and vows to become a servant of the people. A few years later, Pattnayak wrote *Raktamati* (Red Earth) in which a poet selects a mate from among the untouchable class; together they vow to effect more revolutionary changes in the society.[18]

In Kerala, the struggle for freedom raised a fundamental question -- who should wield economic power? The themes of landlord versus tenant were also exploited here in order to spread Communist ideology. *Pattabakki* (The Landlord's Dues; or, Balance of Rent) written by K. Damodaran is the first major work in Kerala to raise this question (see Ayyappa Panikar's extract from this play, pp. 1-16). The plot involves a heroic laborer who is driven off his land by a heartless landlord. Forced to steal for a living the tenant is eventually caught and jailed. Taking advantage of this unfortuante situation, the landlord harasses the tenant's sister, who finally yields to his lecherous desires until he grows tired and throws her out on the street where she is forced to take up a life of prostitution. When the brother is released from prison and happily united with his sister, they launch a life-long campaign against the injustices brought about by the corrupt society in which they find themselves. Obviously, the playwright meant to imply that poverty and dependence of the poor on the upper classes breeds immorality, that only in an equalitarian society may evil be eradicated and that revolution is the only sure means of achieving social change.[19]

One of the IPTA's most effective means for making political propaganda palatable to the common people was to garb it in the familiar forms of traditional theatre of a region. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, enthusiastic workers exploited *burrakatha*, one of the state's most popular forms of storytelling. Typically, in *burrakatha*, a narrator who strums the *burra* (a small tampura) and who is accompanied by two drummers, sings and dances short historical tales (*kathas*) celebrating regional patriots. At times, one of the drummers assumes the role of a clown, freely criticizing contemporary social practices to the delight of the spectators. Periodically, the second drummer impersonates a politician and makes incisive jabs at the corruption of the governmental bureaucracy. The narrator cleverly weaves their criticism into relevant historical tales and manages to accent pathos and heroism in the process. The Andhra Pradesh branch of the IPTA also made use of other tranditional forms of theatre and storytelling, such as the *veethi natakam*, *harikatha* and *yakshagana*

In Maharashtra, *tamasha*, or *lok natya* (people's drama) as it is commonly known, was successfully used during and after the 1940s to spread the doctrine of Communism among the villagers. *Tamasha* is a bawdy form of popular theatre distinguished by its use of female artists who dance and sing. Typically, *tamasha* begins with prayers to Ganapati, the Hindu god of good fortune. Then, Lord Krishna enters and teases the milkmaids who are on their way to Mathura to sell milk. After a lively exchange of suggestive dialogue, Krishna departs and the *wag* (dramatic portion) of the *tamasha* begins. A classic example of a Communist *wag* is *Aklechi goshte* (A Tale of Wisdom) composed by Shahir Annabhav Sathe in 1944.[20]

The story shows how a poor farmer, after gaining knowledge from a local cooperative union, puts an end to the malpractices of a moneylender and a corrupt milkman. Janba, the hero of the piece, confronts the moneylender and the milkman on a village road. Assuming that Janba, like all farmers, is a fool, the corrupt businessmen challenge him to a contest of wits. Each of them agrees to tell a story with the stipulation that if anyone accuses another of his story being a false one, the accuser must forfeit his land and estate. Conveniently, five judges happen along and agree to preside over the contest.

Both the moneylender and the milkman tell outlandish tales believing that even a simpleton would consider them false. But Janba listens patiently and vows that every word they have said must be true. When his turn comes, Janba relates a tale of how two people from his village have cheated the farmers by lending them money at unfair interest rates and by selling them watered-down milk. Supposing that the story is a personal attack on them, the moneylender and the milkman foolishly declare that Janba's story is false, whereupon the judges promptly award Janba their lands and estates. A chorus of jubilant farmers concludes the *wag* with a song of celebration:

We're the lucky children of the earth,
The children of the earth.

Let's go hand-in-hand on the farms
Singing like birds in the forest.

We'll work the fields the whole year round
And watch fruit ripening everywhere.

The grain will look like shining pearls
And we'll eat *bhakri* [goat] from these
  jewels.

We'll destroy the rule of moneylenders and
  black-marketeers
And we'll see the judgment come true.

We'll have equality among all
With no masters and no servants.

We're the lucky children of the earth,
The children of the earth.

Sathe's *wag* is a pointed attack on the middle class and an obvious attempt to romanticize the peasants who are imputed to be naturally intelligent once they have been politicized and made aware of the corruption which surrounds them. The farmer's local cooperative union referred to in the earlier portion of the script is glorified as the instrument of social change. Through it, Janba gains wisdom and uses it against those who would take unfair advantage of him. The song at the end of the *wag* suggests that the meek shall inherit the earth. Sathe, who wrote many popular *wags* around the same basic theme, built a considerable reputation for Communist *tamasha* in Maharashtra. He was aided in his efforts by Shahir Amar Shaikh, one of *tamasha*'s greatest singers who also contributed his talents to the Communist Party about this time and is said to have thrilled hundreds of thousands of people with his folk rhythms charged with radical content.[21]

Despite its ingenious experimentations and national character, the IPTA suffered a major setback when ideologies were polarized within the group after independence in 1947. Many disenchanted artists left the organization in protest because they declared that their work was being misused by the Communist Party. Today, the IPTA is little more than a "paper" organization struggling to survive in several large urban areas.[22]

Convinced that the ideas for which the IPTA stood were viable in modern India, the Communist Party of India (CPI) continued to exploit the potentials of theatre as a vehicle of propaganda in various regional strongholds. In 1952, the Kerala People's Art Club of Trivandrum staged *Ningalenne communistakki* (You Made Me A Communist), which was performed more than six hundred times and is thought to have helped put the Party into office in 1957. The story deals with an old man who abandons his orthodox views of life and embraces Communism when he finally recognizes the evils of capitalism and the plight of the working class under it. Some observers believe that the songs, of which more than 100,000 booklets containing the lyrics have been sold in Kerala to date,[23] were more appealing than the play's political ideology and contributed to its popularity. Whatever the reason for the play's success, the Kerala Congress Party soon retaliated with Kesava Dev's *Jnanippo communistavum* (I Will Not Become a Communist Now), designed to retrieve voters lost in the election. The play tells of a faithful housemaid who threatens to become a Communist depending on the outcome of the elections in which her boss has registered as an independent candiate. It criticizes the corruption of the political system in which all parties try to buy the support of the independent candidates. *Manthriyakkolle* (Don't Make Me a Minister), *Bhagawan macaroni* (Lord Macaroni), and *Kootu krishi* (Collective Farming) were also written during this period to support various political ideologies.[24]

Perhaps the most vocal spokesman for the use of radical content in theatre today is Utpal Dutt, a former member of the IPTA and founder of the People's Little Theatre Group of Calcutta, which has produced plays since 1947. In the early 1950s, Dutt adapted *pathanatika*, a form of street-corner play which is improvisational in form and contemporary in subject matter, as inspiration for one of his own works entitled *Charge Sheet*, used by the Communist Party to urge viewers to seek the release of political prisoners and to support the CPI in the 1952 elections in Bengal. He claims that the play and others like it won many voters for the party.[25]

Dutt's most important early drama was *Angar* (Coal), produced in 1960. The play exposes the irresponsibility of mangers whose unsafe mines bring death to countless laborers. The final scene continues to intrigue spectators even today with its clever lighting techniques which suggest the slowly rising water level in a shaft where the miners are trapped.

In a recent interview, Dutt characterizes his early work as expository, in line with the general trend of the ideological propaganda then current with the pro-Soviet element of the CPI. It was the habit of the leadership, according to Dutt, to regard their speeches as more important than political drama, although they began to realize in 1962 that people came to see plays and not to hear speeches.

Along with other disenchanted artists in the late 1960s, Dutt shifted his allegiance to the CPI(M) (Communist Party of India -- Marxist), the pro-Chinese element of the Party. In line with the radical dogma of the CIP(M), Dutt has recently proposed that, "revolutionary theatre must *preach* revolution; it must not only expose the system (as his earlier plays had done), but also call for the violent smashing of the state machine."[26]

In 1967 his play *Teer* (Arrow) and Anal Gupta's *Rakter rang* (The Color of Blood) romanticized the peasant-guerrillas who were said to be brutalized by soldiers and policement in Naxalbari, a wilderness area of eastern India which has served as a refuge for radicals. Dutt's *Din badaler pala* (Tale of the Changing Times), a courtroom drama written during this period, professes to expose Establishment hypocrisy, proves that West Bengal is being colonized by the Central Government in New Delhi, and shows how the Centre is acting as an agent of foreign powers, namely the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britian.[27] Aware of the potentials of utilizing traditional forms of theatre which appeal to mass audiences, Dutt recently adapted *jatra*, a popular form of Bengali traditional theatre, to suit his strong Marxist viewpoint. The subjects of his most recent *jatra*-style works include Lenin, the fall of Berlin, Vietnam, the indigo revolution,[28] Mao Tse-Tung, the Indian guerrillas of 1944, and the Panjab revolt of 1919.

Perhaps inspired by Dutt's examples and perhaps by their own disenchantment with all political and social institutions, a group of Miranda House College students in New Delhi produced in 1970 a bitter attack on Indian society entitled *India '69*. The aim of the students as boldly announced in the program was "not merely to understand the world, but to change it," sentiments articulated by Marx and paraphrased by Dutt sometime earlier. The students made stabbing attacks at almost every political institution in India, from the Prime Minister to the two Communist parties. Their approach was organized as a revue, with short dramatic and narrative segments punctuated by songs. In one of the segments the Jana Sangh election symbol, under which were written the words *Mein Kampf*, was projected on a giant screen while a mellow voice announced over the P.A. system:

> Hilter wanted to make bombs. For bombs he needed phosphorous. For phosphorus he needed human bones. For bones he needed Jews. So he phosphorized the Jews. The Jana Sangh wants to Indianize the Muslims.[29]

In another segment, the players dramatized Mrs. Gandhi's Bank Nationalization Scheme. The Prime Minister began by referring to her father and ended up by babbling couplets from "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Presiding over the occasion were Nixon and Kosygin, who handed prepared speeches to members of different political parties in India sympathetic to their own political ideology. In a review of the production, a Delhi critic observed that the audience was comprised of the upper-class strata of Delhi society to whom the criticism seemed nothing more than an evening of humorous entertainment.

The Communist Party of India was not the only political organization in the 1940s to capitalize on the propaganda value of theatre, however. In Madras, the Tamil politician C. N. Annadurai, who had recognized the potential of swaying spectator's opinions through his first drama, *Chandrodayam* (The Rise of the Moon)[30] written in 1943, persuaded the leadership of the Dravida Kalagham (DK) to elevate drama to the status of an official party activity. In this he was joined by T. V. Narayanaswami, a leading member of the T.K.S. Brothers Company (one of the largest professional theatre troupes of the period) and other prominent individuals who were active in producing plays at the time: M. Karunanidhi, now the Chief Minister of Madras; E. Nedunchalian, currently the Minister of Education; and, K. A. Nathialokan, until recently, the Minister of Finance.

Through the production of plays, Annadurai and his colleagues sought support for the basic party platform of the DK, which included sovereign independence for the four linguistic divisions of South India, a casteless society in which the brahmanic traditions of Hinduism were eliminated from among the masses, support for widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage, and independence of India from Great Britain.[31] But in 1949, Annadurai and many other members became disenchanted with the leadership and broke away from the Party and formed a more powerful political organization, the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kalagham), which continued to support the basic objectives launched by the DK, but which sought to democratize the leadership and enlist mass membership to consolidate its power base.

The very foundations of the brahmanic tradition of Tamilnadu (The Tamil-speaking region of South India) were shaken when the DMK officially asserted that the *Ramayana* was not in reality the story of a god incarnate, but a traditional piece of North Indian propaganda, designed to gloss over the cultural conquest of Tamilnadu by an unscrupulous adventurer, Rama.[32] Annadurai's play *Neethi thevan mayakkam* (The Seduction of the Just King) reverses the traditional interpretation of Ravana as a villain the solicits audience sympathy for his plight.

By the late 1950s, theatre was one of the major propagandistic activities of the DMK. According to a recent article in *The Drama Review*,

> Almost all the plays were written by dramatists who were also leaders of the party. Very often the major roles were taken by the leaders themselves. Thus, the D.M.K. had evolved a unique arrangement: the D.M.K. politicians could address the public in person, in plays they had written themselves.[33]

With the advent of the "talkies," the DMK swiftly moved to capitalize on cinema as a means of conveying political ideology. Some of the success of the party in 1967 elections may be attributed to the effective use of both theatre and cinema for propaganda and publicity. These forms of traditional and modern media, respectively, also helped to return the party to power in the 1971 elections. Undoubtedly the close ties between the leadership of the party and the methods used to promote it have contributed to the success of the approach.

Compared to the Communist Party of India and the DMK, the Congress Party has been rather slow to use theatre as a vehicle of political propaganda. Perhaps its extraordinary size and power lessened its need to do so until recently. But the Ruling Congress Party (as opposed to the Old Congress Party) lately saw the need to use theatre as a disseminator of knowledge, particularly in the 1971 election campaign in Maharashtra where it reportedly employed half of the two hundred *kalapathkas* (art squads) used by all political parties in the election. According to an unpublished article by Tevia Abrams,

> A majority were hired by the candidates themselves. Six were signed on in mid-January to work directly for the Bombay Central Office, and each was presented with a tour schedule covering 200 performances before the start of polling in March. Together, these six troupes accounted for 1200 performances in a six-week period.[34]

To develop the appropriate political message, the Ruling Congress Party commissioned various writers to compose stories in *tamasha*, the traditional forms of theatre frequently employed by the Communist Party for its own propaganda campaigns in Maharashtra. One of the stories developed for the Ruling

Congress was *We Must Win This Time* by Jagdish Khebudkar of Kolhapur. The play follows all the traditional formulas of a typical *tamasha*, beginning with a song in praise of Lord Ganapati and ending with a dramatic story. After the invocational ritual, Krishna and his partner, Pendya, meet three beautiful *gaulans* (milkmaids) on the road to Mathura. In the ensuing encounter, Pendya proposes that Krishna hold an election to determine the most beautiful among them. Each of the *gaulans* is given a chance to mouth her own political philosophy without actually naming the particular party that she represents. But the spectators easily recognize the Communist Party of India, the Jana Sangh, and the Old Congress, by the girls' remarks. The following bit of dialogue illustrates Khebudkar's humorous method of criticizing the Communist Party of India:

> Pendya: What's your name?
> 2nd Gaulan: My name is Red.
> Pendya: Red?
> 2nd Gaulan: Yes, because everybody like this color at home.
> Pendya: How many people live at your home?
> 2nd Gaulan: Five. They're all called comrades. There are more but they're abroad right now.
> Pendya: Where?
> 2nd Gaulan: In Russia. They're earning money.
> Pendya: What will you do if Krishna elects you?
> 2nd Gaulan: I'll nationalize all the cows. And I'll put them all in government barns. And all the milkmen and milkmaids will work for the government. They'll work and earn on a fair basis. Those who don't agree will go without.
> Pendya: And what about the milk?
> 2nd Gaulan: It will be stored in the government dairy. Those who need it can come to get their quarter litre per day.
> Pendya: And what will you do with Krishna?
> 2nd Gaulan: His rights as a god will be taken away, because I don't believe in gods, his kingdom will be confiscated, and he'll be obliged to seek work in the government dairy.
> Krishna: Pendya, throw her out of India![35]

Eventually, all the girls are discarded except Radha, who is elected the most beautiful *gaulan* because she symbolizes the good qualities that Krishna (the Indian public) desires, those of the Ruling Congress Party.

According to convention, a dramatic story (*vag*) follows the traditional exchange between Krishna and the *gaulans*. Khebudkar's plot is a rather weak allegorical defense of Chavan, the Minister of State from Maharashtra whom Mrs. Gandhi ousted from, and then reinstated in, her cabinet. The author provides no clear justification for Mrs. Gandhi's actions in the affair and one is left to conclude that the people persuaded her to oust him and finally implored her to reinstate him after they realize their mistake. But it seems highly improbable that this was actually the case.

Khebudkar's script also implies that the Ruling Congress Party is Hindu in orientation and orthodox in views. Perhaps the committee of the Ruling Congress Party found it advisable to accent its Hindu leanings in Maharashtra in order to gather votes. Whatever the reason, Khebudkar's *tamasha* was seen frequently throughout Maharashtra before the elections and may have helped to put the Ruling Congress Party firmly on top.

Theatre as a Hindmaiden of Democratic Socialism

Besides initiating and sustaining public support for the independence movement and proving a useful tool of various political parties, the drama and theatre of India have recently publicized a broad range of social welfare, primarily through the auspices of the Government of India. Publicity programs supporting various scheme, such as family planning, the five-year plans, modern methods of agriculture, national integration, unity and defence policies, have been carried out by the Song and Dance Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.[36]

The Division was formed in 1954 under the leadership of Colonel Hemchandra Gupte who, since its inception, has continually sought to broaden the range and scope of activities in which the office is engaged. In a personal interview in 1969, Colonel Gupte stated that his original intention had been to weave material aimed at mass audiences into traditional forms of entertainment, much as the CPI and the DMK had been doing. But he soon discovered to his dismay that the actors whom he engaged to undertake this work could neither read nor write, so plays had to be created by script writers and repeated word for word over and over again until the artists could memorize them by rote. When Colonel Gupte asked for support from literate, urban actors, they only scoffed at his program and accused the Colonel of instituting a dangerous precedent which smacked of Fascism. Finally, it became apparent that puppets and marionettes could best achieve the initial aims of the Ministry. So the Song and Dance Division developed troupes of puppeteers to travel around the country publicizing various themes approved by the Government. The success of these early experiemtns led to a considerable expansion of the operations and to the addition of actors, dancers, and singer. In 1968-69 alone, the total expenditure for only one of several segments of the Division's programs reportedly exceeded Rs. 1,500,000 (approximately $200,000).

The Division now has four permanent drama troupes which regularly tour North India, one of which is exclusively devoted to promoting family planning themes.[37] Eventually, Colonel Gupte hopes to double the number of troupes and to penetrate much of South India. In addition to the four Divisional troupes, the deputy directors of various regional offices of the Song and Dance Division help to sponsor local dramatic, musical, and puppet parties which agree to introduce approved themes, especially those of family planning, into their performances. In 1969, six centers -- at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Calcutta, Chandigarh and Lucknow -- were opened to intensify the Division's programs in the area of family planning.

Besides these schemes, the Song and Dance Division annually send twenty-five troupes of players to propagate themes of national integration, unity, defence and patriotism among the villagers along all the international borders of the country. The parties are required to perform in local dialects and prepare items of their programs in the form of dance and theatre peculiar to each region.

Colonel Gupte's organization also employs nine troupes to entertain the *jawans* (soldiers) in remote areas of the country where theatrical entertainment is rare. The Song and Dance Division is also responsible for organizing and executing a National Drama Festival held every year in New Delhi. Troupes from all over India are sent to the capital to compete for prizes. At the request of the chief of protocol and various governmental departments, the Divisional troupes perform for visiting dignitaries a range of plays, songs and dances stressing India's cultural heritage and the recent successes of the five-year plans.

The most ambitious projects of the Song and Dance Division in recent years have been two sound-and-light programs, one to celebrate Guru Nanak's 500th birthday anniversary in Amritsar during May of 1970, and the other entitled *Asee aasi, asee aasau* (We Are, We Shall Be), produced in Srinagar during November of 1970, which stressed the unity of Kashmir. The first show attracted 10,000 patrons for each free performance. An estimated total of 1,500,000 people are said to have attended the show. The Kashmir performance was done on such a grand scale that it required the use of an entire mountain to illustrate the history of Kashmir. Thousands of people acted in the production and literally tons of scenery and lighting equipment were used to achieve spectacular effects.[38] Undoubtedly, the Song and Dance Division has developed an extremely important channel of communication for disseminating relevant information to the masses.

State governments and private institutions have also used theatre to support social change. In Rajesthan, D. L. Samar of the Bharitiya Lok Kala Mandal, an institution dedicated to sponsoring performances of plays and engaging in research, was granted government funds to mobilize troupes of puppeteers and strolling players of *khyal* and *pad*, tranditional forms of entertainment. Samar seems to have gone about his work systematically, for he required the artists to present their traditional material before a team of workers who then analyzed the forms and selected ways of inserting propaganda into the programs with an aim to preserving their artistic integrity. His most successful experiment seems to have been an adaptation of the *Ramayana* based on a popular puppet play, *Amar sing rathore*, which emphasized the social and moral aspects of the story rather than its religious subject matter.[39]

Recent attempts have been made in Gujarat and Mysore to integrate themes of family planning into traditional performances of *bhavai* and *yakshagana*, the respective forms of village theatre in these states. The Literacy House of Lucknow[40] and the Darpana Academy of Ahmedabad have both used puppet plays to convey social messages, particularly those devoted to family planning.[41]

For years, the Fertilizer and Chemical Companies of Travancore have exploited fairs and festivals (*melas*) to publicize the work of their respective organizations. A market survey made by Hindustan-Lever in the late 1960s is reported to show that nearly 400 *melas* are seen annually in the Coorg district along.[42]

The concern of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication with the effectiveness of the traditional media as a means of communicating modern ideas, resulted in a seminar on 20-21 August 1968, in which the following recommendations were among those made:

> 1. The seminar affirms that traditional forms of entertainment have vast potentials for conveying new ideas and recommends that efforts should be made to utilize them as media of mass communication for bringing about social and economic change;
>
> 2. That the Indian Institute of Mass Communication should organize regional conferences at centers where traditional froms are being intensively used for promoting exchange of information;
>
> 3. And that the Institute should undertake research projects to find out the relative effectiveness of traditional forms and other media of communication.

Conclusions

Little research has been done in any language on the role that theatre has played and ought to play in modern Indian society. Most of the data in English is buried in superficial historical surveys of drama and theatre of various linguistic regions. The playscripts that ought to be analyzed are either out of print or rotting on the shelves of libraries and private collections, often inaccessible to a would-be researcher.[43] Considering the recent interest shown by the Government and political parties in using drama and theatre for their own ends, immediate steps should be taken to form research teams of Indian scholars to preserve and analyze the pre- and post-independence data before it is lost through carelessness.

The effect of drama as a means of molding public opinion ought to be systematically studied by competent temas of communication researchers. Up to now, comment has been the perogative of literary critics, newspaper, and periodical reviewers,[44] whose judgement is often colored by an obvious bias against such attempts. Studies to determine whether or not people change their behavior or opinions as a result of exposure to theatre would prove invaluable to writers and producers. It seems strangely inconsistent that the CPI and DMK should have overlooked this important aspect of communication research. It is to their credit, however, and later to that of the Central Government, that they recognized the potential of reaching millions of people in the rural areas through traditional forms of theatre. Perhaps the successful use of theatre as a vehicle of social change in the People's Republic of China encouraged the Indians to explore its potentials.[45]

Whatever the outcome of research and systematic evaluation, it is apparent from the acceleration of efforts in recent years that theatre will continue to be used by the state and national governments, political parties and private organizations for spreading the ideas of social change.[46] But perhaps theatre may be put to more positive social uses if the process of traditional communication is scientifically scrutinized.

Finally, a new standard of literary criticism may have to be evolved to deal with the growing corpus of plays produced by and for social and political institutions, since it seems somewhat inconsistent to criticize writers in this field for abandoning the established principles of artistic creation when their aim and purpose is not to produce a literary masterpiece, but to bring about social change.

FOOTNOTES

1. Manomohan Ghosh, trans., *The Natyasastra Ascribed to Bharata Muni*, 2 vols., 2nd rev. ed. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1967), I, 14-15.

2. Banda Kanakalingeshwara Rao, "The Kuchipudi Dance Drama," *Marg*, XIX, 2 (March 1966), 33, and reiterated in his unpublished paper entitled "Folk Forms of Art as Media for Mass Communication," prepared for a Seminar on Traditional Media of Communication, sponsored by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, 20-21 August 1968.

3. Most of the details in the following discussion regarding the content and production of *Nildarapana* are drawn from Das Gupta's account in *The Indian Stage*, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Metropolitan Printing and Publishing House, Ltd., 1934-1946), III (1938), 91-111, 172-78, and 243-45.

4. Balwant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962), p. 109.

5. Quoted in Das Gupta, p. 251. The original is in verse.

6. Das Gupta, pp. 261-62.

7. *The Englishman*, 15 March 1876, quoted in Das Gupta, p. 255.

8. India, Government Legislative Department, *The Unrepealed General Acts of the Governor General in Council*, 2 vols., 5th ed. (Calcutta: Government of India, 1928), II, 74-75.

9. Shantaram, "Marathi Drama," *Indian Literature*, I, 2 (April-September 1958), 112.

10. For details concerning this and other dramas banned between 1898 and 1910, see India, Government of Bombay, *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, 2 vols. (Bombay: Government Printing, Publishing and Stationery, 1958), II, 674-81.

11. Asutosh Bhattacharyya, "Bengali Drama," *Indian Literature*, I, 2 (April-September 1958), 80.

12. Som Benegal, *A Panorama of Theatre in India* (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1967), p. 103.

13. Som Benegal, "Theatre's Commitment," *Enact*, no. 39 (March 1970), p. 39.

14. Sajjad Zaheer, *The Living and the Dead*, *Indian Writing*, I, 4 (August 1941), 201-202.

15. Samik Bandyopadhyay, "After Professionalism," *The Drama Review*, XV, 3 (Spring 1970), 239.

16. Utpal K. Banerjee, "Walk Ahead of Me," *Enact*, no. 9 (August 1967), unpaginated.

17. Bandyopadhyay, "After Professionalism," p. 239.

18. Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, "Historical Growth of Oriya Drama and Theatre," unpublished paper, Drama Seminar of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1958, p. 211.

19. P. K. Parameswaran Nair, *History of Malayalam Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1967), p. 158.

20. This play has been translated and adopted into English by Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams.

21. Tevia Abrams, "A Dash of Art with Your Politics," an unpublished article, 7 March 1971.

22. Sachin Sen Gupta, "People's Theatre in India," *Unity*, II, 5 (December 1952-January 1953), 8-17.

23. K. M. George, "Malayalam Drama," *Indian Literature*, I, 2 (April-September 1958), 110.

24. Personal interview with N. N. Pillai, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, January 1970.

25. A. J. Gunawardana, "Theatre as a Weapon: An Interview with Utpal Dutt," *The Drama Review*, XV, 3 (Spring 1970), 232.

26. Gunawardana, p. 225.

27. Avik Ghosh, "Last Month in Delhi," *Enact*, no. 52 (April 1971), unpaginated.

28. This is the famous incident on which *Nildarpana* was also based.

29. Sumanta Banerjee, "Review of 'India '69'," *Enact*, no. 40 (April 1970), unpaginated.

30. The following material was derived primarily from an article by Karthigesu Sivathamby, "Politicians as Players," *The Drama Review*, XV, 3 (Spring 1970), 212-22.

31. R. S. Perinbanayagam, "Caste, Politics and Art," *The Drama Review*, XV, 3 (Spring 1970), 209.

32. Milton Singer notes that the parody produced riots which led to strong legislation in 1954-55 to regulate dramatic performances. See "The Great Tradition in a Metropolitan Center: Madras," *Traditional India: Structure and Change*, ed. Milton Singer (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959), pp. 154-55.

33. Sivathamby, p. 217.

34. Abrams article, unpaginated.

35. Unpublished script has been translated and adapted by Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams.

36. Much of the following discussion is based on a personal interview with Colonel Hemchandra Gupte, Director of the Song and Dance Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, October 1969, and from an official Background Note obtained from the Division outlining its objectives and achievements.

37. Unfortunately, scripts prepared by the staff writers of the Song and Dance Division were not made available to the author during several visits to the Central Office in New Delhi between 1969 and 1970. The only performance seen was *Jagran* (Awakening), a dance extravaganza which pictured the virtues of developing water wells with electrical pumps and using modern agricultural machinery.

38. For details, see the reviews by Rajinder Paul in *Enact*, no. 41 (May 1970) and no. 47 (November 1970).

39. Information derived from an unpublished paper by D. L. Samar entitled "The Use of Tranditional Media for Communication," prepared for a Seminar on Traditional Media of Communication, sponsored by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, 20-21 August 1968.

40. In an annual report submitted to USAID, Washington, D.C., in 1969, Literacy House listed nine courses in puppetry, 117 puppeteers trained, and 458 puppet shows produced before an estimated total audience of 250,000 villagers during the period from 1 July 1964, to 31 December 1968. By 1970 eighteen puppet plays of various lengths dealing with family planning, agricultural reforms and life insurance were in the permanent repertory of the regularly employed puppeteers. The financial support for this interesting organization comes from three main sources: (1) USAID and private contributions in the United States made to World Education, Inc., New York City; (2) World Literacy of Canada; and (3) The Government of India, private contributions from Indian citizens and the sale of publications and other materials. In recent years the Life Insurance Corporation of India has commissioned Literacy House puppeteers to produce plays supporting the need for life insurance among villagers and, according to representatives of World Education interviewed in New York in March 1972, the productions have been so successful that the Life Insurance Corporation continues to fund this activity generously.

41. Meher R. Contractor, "The Role of Puppetry in Contemporary Education," *Journal of the Sangeet Natak Akademi*, XV (January-March 1970), 31-40.

42. Pillai interview.

43. Perhaps the largest single collection of published and unpublished manuscripts in Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi and English is housed in the Censorship Office of Bombay, where one copy or scenario of every play presented in the city since the early 1950s has been faithfully preserved, Undoubtedly, other large urban areas of the country have similar collections. One wonders if a national research library ought to be established to house, catalogue and maintain these valuable documents.

44. An exception is reported by G. C. Tiwari in "Puppets Propagate Ideas," *Yojana*, XIII, 9 (18 May 1969), 15. Tiwari briefly documents the "business value" of a puppet play promoting the benefits of buying life insurance which was played 440 times for an estimated combined audience of 250,000 people in villages of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The success of the production was determined by "counting the increased number of enquiries at the local L. I. C. [Life Insurance Corporation of India] units over the above their normal frequency in the weeks that followed the performances and by interviewing the L. I. C. field staff on the impact that they felt on their business. It was found that in nearly all branches the enquiries significantly exceeded their normal number."

Although the research methods described may not warrant the conclusion that "puppetry hits bull's eye in traditional societies which have to be persuaded into accepting new ways of life," at least some quantative research was attempted before evaluating the effectiveness of the play among the spectators.

45. N. N. Pillai, "Traditional Theatre in Modern Communication," an unpublished paper prepared for a Seminar on Traditional Media and Communication, sponsored by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, 20-21 August 1968.

46. Benegal, "Theatre's Commitment," p. 39, concludes that "there is enough of encouragement in the atmosphere" to sustain a campaign in this direction.

SOCIALIST REALISM AND INDIAN LITERATURE:
THE COMMENT OF A NON-LITTERATEUR

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As one reads the rich and informative papers which comprise this collection, one still feels that so many important questions have remained unanswered. Of what literary merit is the school of Socialist Realism in India: what techniques of form and structure have been utilized in the composition of major works in the genre? Is there a vital literary society uniting authors with their audience in a series of shared expectations and judgments and a common background among them? Who, in fact, is the audience of Socialist Realism? How do authors and audiences communicate with other authors and audiences -- or do they? -- across the linguistic boundaries in India? Very few of the contributors have considered these questions. Over all, one is left with the impression that Socialist Realism has an artificial quality, characterized by propagandistic and didactic purposes. It is a form of alien origin, not yet at home in India.

This is brought out quite clearly in Carlo Coppola's paper on the All-Indian Progressive Writers' Association (see pp. 1-34, Volume I). Socialist Realism was, according to Coppola, an imposition from above, and afar. Young Indian writers in England, caught up in European political currents of the 1930s and influenced by British leftists, decided to commit the future of Indian literature. From London, some thirty-five Indian students declared in 1934:

> It is the object of our association to rescue literature and other arts from the priestly, academic and decadent classes in whose hands they have degenerated so long; to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people; and to make them the vital organs which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future. . . . We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today -- the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation, so that it may help us to understand these problems, and through such understanding help us act.

Changes in literary form and content were not generated by social and economic changes within India, or even considered without ideological blinders. Coppola indicates this when he states, "There were no concerted efforts to translate the literature of one language into that of another and to keep writers of one part of the country abreast of what was going on elsewhere." One wonders what the writers at home were creating while the expatriates were issuing declarations.

It is an important question because Socialist Realism as a literary form seems to have been least successful where authors adhered to ideological rigidities, and more successful when they accomodated themselves to Indian conditions. For example, R. K. Kaushik comments about Indian authors writing Social Realist novels in English,

> [They are] handicapped by a spirit which is too heavily grounded in pre-conceived ideas and prejudices to rise to the infinite patterns of Indian thought and behavior -- and reduce themselves to the level of purveyors of sociological data which, in spite of its apparent solidity of documentation, and profusion of local color, rings somewhat false and pendantic. (pp. 61-88, Volume I)

Yogendra K. Malik comments about Hindi novelists, "Because of their strong ideological bias . . . and their lack of real insight into the life of the Indian masses, none of them have been able to produce any outstanding work interpretive of the fast-changing social and political life in India." (pp. 159-176, Volume I)

On the other hand, V. A. Shahane attributes the success of the realist school in Marathi literature to its kinship with seventeenth-century *bhakti*, nineteenth-century humanism and twentieth-century social concerns; he is careful, however, to distinguish this "Progressive" trend from orthodox Socialist Realism (pp. 17-30). In the drama, Farley Richmond points out, the introduction of Socialist Realism has been vital, drawing up the Indian tradition of "the explcitation of theatre as a tool of education, publicity and propaganda." (pp. 167-188)

The literature of Socialist Realism has not yet taken deep root in India; the conditions which support it are not widespread enough. Socialist Realism presupposes a breadth of shared activity in society with which the reader can identify. In the West, class along with industrialization and urbanization has been the equalizer of experience. In the class society, the content of any piece of literary work is made real through the accumulation of intimate details which are readily accessible to its audience. The reader does not feel special knowledge is needed to appreciate the particularities of Mary Barton's home, the pastimes of the miners in Zola's *Germinale*, or the worries of the Dickensian slum-dweller.

In India, experience has not yet been universalized. The existence of *jāti* closes the life-ways of any one group off from others. In each household or groups of households different gods are worshipped, in different ways, and even different customary names prevail; and these differences are, in turn, overlaid by regional and provincial differences in social structure, mores and dialect. To appreciate any particular situation the Indian reader needs special knowledge -- "sociological data" in Kaushik's words -- or he will not readily perceive the situation as real. Thus the literature of Socialist Realism retains an artifical quality.

With the expansion of industry, cities, education and the like, experience will grow more standardized in India. In this light, it is significant that realist poetry has been most successful in the urban cauldron of Calcutta. As Amitendranath Tagore writes,

> That little village has grown to be the megalopolis of Calcutta and toys with the problems of life, just as in Tokyo, New York or Rio de Janeiro. Bengali poets today are primarily residents of this urban area, and it would be futile to talk about any Bengali village-based poet, whether from the western or eastern part of Bengal, because like Bengali refugees the poets have migrated and are still migrating to this urban center for intellectual as well as economic reasons. (pp. 55-60)

The Bengali poets have indeed become so urbanized that they feel a kinship of experience with city-dwellers throughout the world -- literary men and audiences in other parts of India will only in time catch up with them.

"PURPOSIVE" LITERATURE AND LITERARY CRAFTSMANSHIP

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Literary craftsmanship -- the artistic use of subject matter and style -- is the vital link between the writer and his audience. This link may be expanded, contracted, varied, or metamorphosed, but it must not be broken. If it breaks, communication ceases, and the literary work no longer performs its function of conveying a persuasive idea from writer to reader.

Craftsmanship, or literary artistry, is, in fact, much more than an expedient link. Craftsmanship gives a work of literature the enduring qualities that enable it to communicate with audiences of the future as well as of the present. This, above all, is what the writer of genuinely "purposive" literature desires, but he defeats his purpose when he allows obvious propaganda to dominate unobtrusive artistry.

In poetry, fiction, and drama, the essentials of literary artistry are unity of theme and plot; believable, rounded characterizations; dialogue that convinces the reader that he is in the presence of believable characters; and a consistent authorial point of view. If these essentials are lacking, it will not matter whether the writer's view is Progressive or conservative, whether his contexts are sociological, Socialist, or humanist. It will not matter because he will have lost his audience.

In the papers collected here, there seems to be remarkable little reference to literary concerns as such. Professor Kaushik, in his "Indian Poetry in English and Socialist Realism," asks: "But is a markedly sociological approach to literature cultivated only by those writers who profess a specific social philosophy and political creed? Generally so." That "Generally so," I think, makes this statement unacceptable as a critical guideline. It is true that the poet (or any other writer of imaginative literature) cannot avoid social responsibility, for in the final analysis, all good imaginative literature is the writer's effort to comment honestly and persuasively upon civilization as he knows it. Literary craftsmanship, however, is the *sine qua non* for the survival of any "socilogical literature" that uses an imaginative genre as its vehicle. By his choice of structure and style the writer implies a value judgment; both commentary and value judgment exist in a vacuum and achieve little, unless they are cast in a form that will endure. Centuries of world literary history have demonstrated that literature that endures, endures not only because it says something important, but because it says something artistically.

Purposive literature in any language does both itself and society a disservice when it settles for the short-term goal of passing propaganda. On the other hand, a writer whose message is enhanced by literary craftsmanship of a high order is much more likely to reach those readers who really matter: readers with sufficient sensitivity and perception to grasp new ideas and translate them into intelligent and effective social action. Such readers may never have heard of the Aristotelian unities, but they are likely to be persons with an innate sense of structure and order. They will recognize instinctively a literary work with a beginning, a middle, and an end in logical and esthetically satisfying proportions.

India's "Progressive" writers often seem to have difficulty in coming to terms with this necessity for combining purposive writing with literary craftsmanship. They tend too often to scamp craftsmanship in favor of passing polemics, and they seem to fear that a retreat into mysticism is the only alternative to propaganda. The perfection of craftsmanship is painful and time-consuming, but it can be a reliable guide between the Scylla of raw propaganda and the Charybdis of muzzy mysticism. Rabindranath Tagore's experience with readers and critics in the West after 1913 should provide sobering reminders of the consequences of abandoning the consistent practice of literary craftsmanship; he chafed under the discipline required for producing artistic translations, and he was irritated by the demands of this discipline, which he found "cold-blooded." The resulting lapses in the quality of too many of his translated works finally broke the link between him and Western audiences whom, for India's sake, it was desperately imperative he should keep.

The novels and plays of present-day "Progressive" Indian writers cannot be faulted for sincerity and depth of social concern; but, if the excerpts provided here are a representative sampling, they tend too often to fall short of the standards of literature that endures. When judged as literature rather than as propaganda, long stretches of these excerpts are awkward and inept and therefore boring; it would be difficult to convince non-Indian readers (and perhaps Indian readers as well) that this literature will endure, or that it matters even in passing. Much poetry quoted here is diffuse and even ungrammatical and cannot stand the strain of rigorous critical analysis. Nor will it do to hide behind the translator, claiming as sanctuary the unsatisfactoriness of all translations. The fact that these papers have been prepared and submitted bears testimony to a laudable desire to reach an audience wider than that of a single language area. Untranslated works that meet the highest standards for artistic literature need not fear similarly artistic translation.

Amitendranath Tagore points out that Bengali poets of the mid-twentieth century have chosen to turn outward toward the world at large. This choice marks a cultural point of no return; the writer who accepts this fact of social and literary life makes perhaps the most important decision of his career. Again, these Bengali poets and all Indian writers may be warned by and extra-literary, pressed in upon him because, after he had chosen to pass this point of no return, he made periodic attempts to turn back. Many of his troubles vis-à-vis Western publishers and critics are directly traceable to his reluctance to accept the fact that he could never return to the old days and the old ways of literary isolation -- nor, in his heart of hearts, did he really wish to do so.

"Progressive" writers, of all literary people, have no business turning back. But they may be *forced* back, and thus find themselves speaking only to one another, if they lose contact with their audience, in this or any future generation.

SOCIALIST REALISM IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

Panel at the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of
The Association for Asian Studies

New York City, 29 March 1972

Papers read by title:

1. Frederick W. Blackwell (Washington State University). "Comment on on Mohan Rakesh and Socialist Realism."
2. Carlo Coppola (Oakland University). "The All-India Progressive Writers' Association: The European Phase."
3. Robert Goldman (University of California, Berkeley). "D. D. Kosambi's Sanskrit Scholarship: A Marxist Approach to Sanskrit Literature."
4. R. K. Kaushik (Delhi College). "Indian Poetry in English and Socialist Realism."
5. __________. "Socialist Realism and the Indian Novel in English."
6. Prabhakar Machwe (Sahitya Akademi). "A Personal View of the Progressive Writers' Movement."
7. Yogendra Malik (University of Akron). "Socialist Realism and Hindi Novels."
8. Athar Murtuza (Washington State University). "Art, Life and Myth: Aspects of the Poetic Theory and Practice of Faiz Ahmed Faiz."
9. K. Ayyappa Paniker (English Language Institute, University of Kerala). "Socialist Realism and Progressive Literature Movement in Malayalam."
10. V. A. Shahani (Osmania University). "Realism in Marathi Creative Writing."

Papers presented:

1. Surjit Singh Dulai (Michigan State University). "*Pragatīvād* in Panjabi Literature."
2. Corinne Friend (University of Pennsylvania). "The Evolution of Yashpal from Socialist Realist to Humanist."

3. Panna Naik (University of Pennsylvania). "Two Gujarati Socialist Realist Poets: Sundaram and Umashankar Joshi."

4. Cyriac Pullapilly (Notre Dame-Saint Mary University). "Muhammad Bashir and Socialist Realism in the Malayalam Short Story."

5. P. Srinivasa Rao (LaSalle College). "Socialist Realism in Kannada Literature."

6. Farley Richmond (Michigan State University). "The Social Role of Theatre in India."

7. Anjani K. Sinha (University of Chicago). "Socialist Realism in Modern Hindi Poetry."

8. Amitendranath Tagore (Oakland University). "Bengali Poets Today: Conflict of Self and the World."

Discussants:

1. Irene A. Gilbert (Simmons College).

2. Mary M. Lago (University of Missouri).

Papers submitted after panel:

1. Ahmed Ali (Karachi, Pakistan). "The Progressive Writers' Movement and Creative Writers in Urdu."

2. Marlene Fisher (Manhattanville College). "Mulk Raj Anand: The Novelist as Novelist."

3. Gopalan V. Gopalan (Indiana State University). "Jhaverchand Meghani: The People's Poet."

4. V. Narayana Rao (University of Wisconsin). "The Influence of Marxism on the Poetry of Sri Sri."

5. Vilas Sarang (Indiana University). "Marxist Orientation in the Poetry of Vinda Karandikar and Narayan Surve."

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Ahmed Ali: for biographical details, see Coppola article, pp. 1-34 as well as in the article by Mr. Ali.

Frederick W. Blackwell: teaches Hindi language and Indian literature; his dissertation from the University of Wisconsin dealt with the characterization of women in Indian literature.

Carlo Coppola: teaches Hindi and Urdu language and Indian literature; his dissertation from the University of Chicago dealt with the Progressive Movement in Urdu poetry; he is an editor of the *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

Surjit Singh Dulai: teaches humanities and writes extensively on Punjabi literature; he is currently preparing an anthology of modern Punjabi poetry in English translation, as well as a bibliography of Punjabi literature.

Marlene Fisher: teaches English; she has recently returned from a trip to India where she gathered materials for a book-length study of novelist Mulk Raj Anand.

Corinne Friend: holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania where she prepared a dissertation on Yashpal; she is currently translating Yashpal's *Amitā* for UNESCO.

Irene A. Gilbert: teaches political science and is presently preparing a study of British educators in India.

Robert P. Goldman: teaches Sanskrit; he is currently working on a book dealing with myth in Indian epics.

Gopalan V. Gopalan: though born in Madras, was educated at the University of Baroda; his dissertation from Indiana University dealt with the folkloric aspects of Meghani's poetry.

R. K. Kaushik: teaches English and has written extensively on both English and Indo-Anglian literature; he is currently preparing a book-length study of novelist Nayantara Sahgal.

Mary M. Lago: teaches English and has published extensively on the subject of Bengali literature; her *Imperfect Encounter*, the correspondence between Rabindranath Tagore and Sir John Rothenstein, was recently published by Harvard University Press.

Prabhakar Machwe: is General Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, India's national academy of letters; for biographical details, see the article by Dr. Machwe.

Yogendra Malik: teaches political science and is presently editing a volume of essays on the political novel in India.

Athar Murtuza: is presently completing his Ph.D. in English literature at Washington State University with a dissertation on the element of the grotesque in Shakespeare.

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K. Ayyappa Paniker: holds a Ph.D. in English from Indiana University and is editor of *Kēraḷa kavitā* (Kerala Poetry), a leading Malayalam poetry journal.

V. Narayana Rao: teaches Telugu and has been closely associated with the contemporary Telugu literary scene both as a writer and critic; he has just completed a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin which deals with the Marxist literature of Telugu.

Farley Richmond: teaches drama and has produced a large number of Indian plays in various genres; he is currently editing a special Indian drama number of the *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

Vilas Sarang: holds a Ph.D. in English from Bombay University and is completing a second one from Indiana University; he has published extensively in both prose and poetry in Marathi; a number of his translations of his own works have appeared both here and in England.

V. A. Shahane: holds a Ph.D. in English from Leeds University; he has published extensively on the works of E. M. Forster; his book *Khushwant Singh* has just appeared in the Twayne World Authors Series.

Anjani K. Sinha: teaches Hindi and formerly taught English literature at Patna University; he is presently completing a Ph.D. in linguistics.

Amitendranath Tagore: teaches Chinese language and literature and Indian civilization courses; he has published extensively on the leftist movement in Chinese literature as well as on classical Chinese poetry.

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